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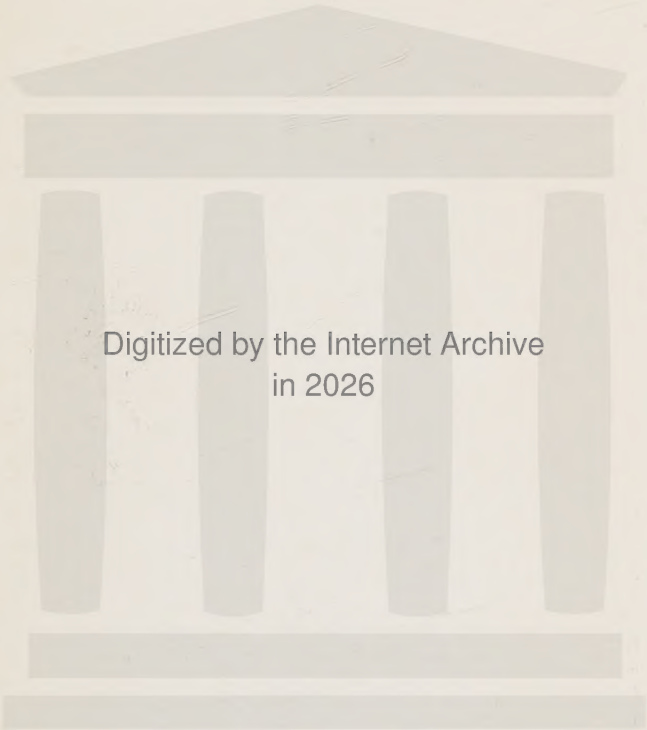
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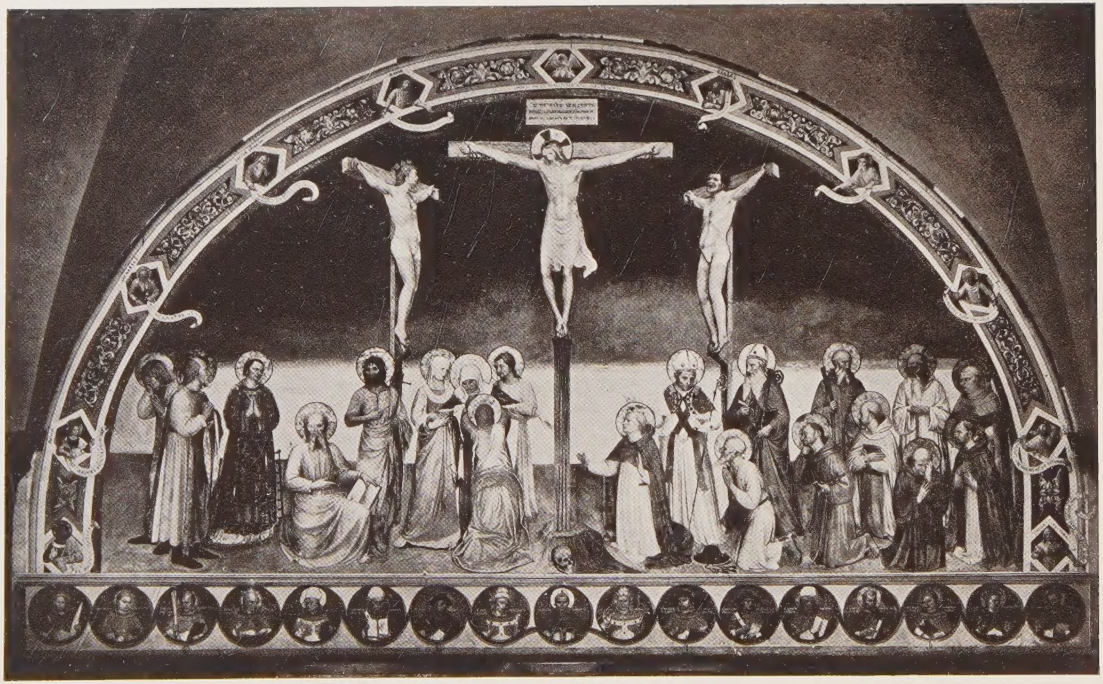

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THE PASSION IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

BY THE

REV. JESSE BRETT, L.Th.

CHAPLAIN OF ALL SAINTS' HOSPITAL, EASTBOURNE

AUTHOR OF

"THE ALTAR AND THE LIFE," "THE DIVINE FRIENDSHIP," "THE GARDEN OF GOD," ETC.

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PREFACE

The Christian religion is a religion of ideals. Every lawful aspiration has its Divine sanction, if not the authorization of a Divine command. Nothing is left to the uncertain imagination or the caprice of the individual. There is but one standard, one ideal embodying every idea of perfection for every Christian. All that is lawful in the spiritual life, and ultimately desirable, is presented for our guidance in aspiration and effort, in the Personal Life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to imitate Him, to follow in His footsteps, because in Him is revealed all that is proper to our human nature. The apostolic conception of the Church's work is that every man may be presented "*perfect in Christ Jesus.*" We are so to live in belief and practice that we may come in "*the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*"

There are, no doubt, extravagances both in teaching and practice which cannot be defended or

justified. But these are not to be confused with the rightful aspirations and efforts after spirituality which are the soul's true response to the pure attractions of the Catholic Faith. They who aspire to great things, to spiritual ideals, need no justification if they do it in the simple following of Christ, and in obedience to the Church. They will not lose their way, but rather by their own straightforwardness will make clear the way which to many is obscure and difficult. The imitation of Christ is the secret of that high spiritual attainment which combines interior knowledge with the openness and freedom of pure charity. But this imitation is not a mere copying of His ways in outward details, but rather the application of the principles which governed His holy life. It becomes therefore the work of the Christian to discover those principles, and to shape his interior life and to adjust his motives, and to direct his intentions accordingly. This is done in prayer, in intimate communion, when the soul in self-determination makes the will of God its law, the love of God its end.

It is my purpose in this book to trace, however imperfectly, the lines by which we may be conformed to the likeness of Jesus through the understanding of His Passion, and the application to ourselves of those great principles of the Spiritual Life which are recognized in their clearest form in His endurance of the Cross. We may expect in

the teaching of the Passion to find the most certain guide for all whose aim it is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ; for in His Death our Lord asserted all those great principles of Spiritual action which combined in the perfect expression of Incarnate Love. He revealed that glory of pure love which ever since has inspired the aspirations of the Saints.

This book is mainly a reprint of papers which have appeared in the *English Church Review*, and my best thanks are due to the Editor, the Rev. W. J. Sparrow Simpson, for his courteous consideration in respect of their reproduction. Some of the chapters are new, and others have been carefully revised.

May all who find in these pages encouragement in the hard Way of the Cross, attain through the grace of our Lord to a share in His Victory.

J. B.

CONTENTS

PAGE

I. The Saintly Way 1
1. The Example of the Saints 3
2. The Way of the Saints not an Outworn Way 7
3. The Soul's "Passion" 9

II. Self-surrender 12
1. Self-surrender is Inherent in the Idea of Love 13
2. It involves Suffering 17
3. Love is Superior to Suffering 20

III. Mortification 23
1. Our Attitude towards Sin 24
2. Exterior Mortification 28
3. Interior Mortification 31

IV. Detachment 35
1. The Call to Detachment 36
2. Detachment of the Cross 40
3. Detachment of Love 43

V. Loneliness 46
1. In Penitence 48
2. In Prayer 51
3. In Suffering 54

PAGE

VI. Loneliness (*continued*) 59
1. The Understanding 62
2. The Memory 65
3. The Will 69

VII. The Prayer of Submission 73
1. The Prayer of the Faithful Soul 74
2. The Trial 78
3. After the Trial 81

VIII. Reparation 85
1. The Revelation of the Place of Reparation in the Working of Love 86
2. The Call to Reparation 90
3. Acts of Reparation 93

IX. Love 96
1. What we learn from the Cross 97
2. Pure Love 101
3. Victorious Love 106

X. Conformity 110
1. Conformity to the Passion of Jesus . . . 111
2. Conformity to the Likeness of Jesus . . . 115
3. Communion of the Cross 119

XI. The Fruits of the Passion 122
1. Intuition 123
2. Power 126
3. Fulness of Life 129

XII. Victory 133
1. Present Victories 134
2. The Final Victory 138
3. Conclusion 141

I

The Saintly Way

The way of the Cross is the way of the Saints. It is the royal way wherein they follow who are nearest the King. It is the way which indeed is set before us all, but it is not attractive to all. It is a high and holy way into which souls are not compelled, but allured; for it is love which guides the feet of the Saints. It is strange that the Lord's chosen way should not be likewise the chosen way of all whom He has called; but we cannot say that the way of the Cross is universally chosen and loved of men. "Jesus hath many lovers of His Kingdom of Heaven, but He hath few bearers of His Cross," wrote Thomas à Kempis, and the statement is sadly true. There is generally evident a desire to escape from all restrictions in the way of worldly enjoyment, with the result that many are ignorant of a higher joy, and the gladness of the Saints is not understood. There is to be observed on all sides an avoidance of mortification and of the sterner elements of the spiritual life. If sometimes we are led to think of them by what we see as the fruit of them in some holy soul, we are moved to little more than

admiration; we are not more ready to make choice of the Cross. Even our Lord's own words are received into unwilling *hearts: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."* We would have Jesus without His Cross, not perceiving that without His Cross He never gives the richest treasures of His love; and the result is a certain un-Christlikeness in those who by their profession should be Christlike. We have Christianity robbed of its most sacred charm, and Christian lives lacking the glow of that mystic fire which lights the way of the Cross.

If we seek a reason for this we find it in the fact that too often the spiritual life is not taken seriously. There is a want of purpose, as though the soul were not the first care, and Heaven not the desired end. But beneath this is there not wanting a deeper love for our Lord Himself? Is there not lacking the knowledge, the simple understanding which accompanies love? This is the real want, and the evidence is presented wherever there is a shrinking from the way of the Cross, and irresolution in meeting the strict demands of the higher life. If we love truly we grow in love, and desire to prove it in higher and more perfect ways; but what are the ways open to us? They are the old ways by which alone true love can ever be proved: self-surrender, self-sacrifice, fervent desire and careful seeking of all that is noblest and purest for the satisfaction of the one loved. If we

seek encouragement in our desire to prove our love in these ways, we have it in the words and examples of the Saints; they instruct us in all the difficulties of the spiritual life. But where may we seek for any example which is not given pre-eminently in the Passion of Jesus? We look no further than the Cross of Jesus to find love in its simplest and highest expression. To be conformed to Him in the necessary suffering of our own life becomes at once both the proof of our love to Him and the realization of His love to us. We see how in Him love was glorified through the Passion; but we also perceive that this glory was reached because He willed to suffer and die.[1] There is for us all a corresponding glory of love; and it is to be won through our willing conformity to the Passion of our Divine Redeemer. If we are willing He will work with us, and sustain us, and cheer us with His sympathy while we endure our passion and prove to the uttermost our love for Him. But for the unwilling there is no joy in the way of the Cross, because no sympathy with Jesus. We must be willing sharers of His Cross if we would experience the tenderness of His Heart towards those who suffer.

1. *The example of the Saints.*

In all the suffering of the spirit, and in all the great undertakings of love, we are peculiarly alone.

[1] St. John x. 17, 18.

It must be so because of our individual relation to our Lord. And yet as we attain to any degree of love, or realize a little the greatness of the higher life, we perceive that we are not alone; others in their own way have learned the same truths and felt the constraint of the Divine love. The Saints have travelled by the same road and have left for us their testimony, not always in written records, but in that which they added to the collective experience of the Church. Catholic experience is not a vague sentiment, or an indefinite quantity, of which we take account when we determine the course of a life; it is that sure basis of fact which gives us confidence as in our own way we discover the footprints of the Saints, and realize the sympathy of those great souls. And we learn from this what love may do and dare as we mark their ascent in love from simple to heroic acts. We learn how they prayed and how they suffered; how they persevered and conquered; and how they attained to pure love and the Divine union. And always we see them faithful to the Cross, choosing it, exalting it, in holy ambition to be worthy of their vocation as disciples of the Crucified. They aspired to complete conformity to their suffering Lord, rejoicing if they could say with St. Paul, "*I am crucified with Christ.*"

But there is more than even the holiest human aspiration in such lives. God Who is "wonderful

in the power of all His Saints," Himself directs the movements of love within the soul, so that there is a true and regular correspondence on its part in the aspirations of love, to the wonderful ways of His Divine love. Thus the soul of a Saint is made beautiful by the operation of God Himself, while at the same time it is by its own free surrender given as wax to the seal. The inner life of a Saint passes description. It does not consist in the strictness of religious routine, but is yet not independent of spiritual exercises. When we have duly considered his works and his charity, his penance and his prayers, we have gained but a glimpse of his inner life. That glimpse shows the burning of a great love, a fire in which has been consumed all that was earthly in a consecrated life. But within that living fire there is both the joy and the pain of love as he realizes himself in God: joy for the great and glorious love in which he is one with the Beloved; pain for all that he perceives still of imperfection as he subjects all things within himself, motives and impulses, to the searching rays of Divine love. So we may understand somewhat of the inner life of a Saint, while yet he is in the flesh; but of a Saint in glory who shall dare to speak? Let St. Paul indicate the truth: God will "*be glorified in His Saints.*" There will be such perfection of love that in each He Who is all-glorious will yet "*be glorified.*"

The secret of this holiness is to be found in the union of our wills with God's will. God wills our sanctification and we must likewise will it, and in consistent forsaking of ourselves seek nothing but the satisfaction of the demand of Divine love. Can we attain to anything so high? Yes; because God never calls us to any degree of love without also giving the grace whereby we may attain to it. When therefore we perceive and understand the way of the higher life, and are sensible to the attractions of holiness, we are unfaithful to God and to our own spiritual nature if we do not respond. We may see but a little way before us, but faith assures us, and experience widens at every step, and there are cheering lights which encourage us even in the way of the Cross. As soon as we have entered that Divine way we know that faithful love will bear us to the heights upon which we look, and will overcome the fears which beset us.

We should desire that high attainment to which love directs us as we seek to understand the holy will of God in our sanctification. With what great desire our Lord went forward to His Cross, and, indeed, unto the end! Love is never without desire; and therefore His desire is to be understood as one with His love. Our desire will be according to our love as we follow in the way of the Cross. Do we desire great things, or seek through the Cross to attain to the heights of pure

devotion? We shall ascend no higher than the degree of our love. This is the secret of saintly exaltation. The Saints love with great purity, therefore they are exalted; they are like their Lord Whose footsteps they follow. His Own promise is fulfilled in them: "*If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be.*"

2. *The way of the Saints not an outworn way.*

Souls are still called to holiness, and the way of the Cross is still the way of the Saints; but we are confronted with the difficulties of our time. A prevailing materialism has obscured the Catholic view of the higher life, and speculative theology, professing to restate the truth in terms of modern thought, has not preserved the finer conceptions of the Saints. It is necessary, therefore, to insist that the way of the Saints is not an outworn way; just because it is God's way, "the royal way of the holy Cross." It is, however, a neglected way, it does not attract the self-loving and the worldly-minded. Perhaps it would be truer to say not only that such are not attracted to it, but that they do not even perceive the open way of the Cross. Worldliness blinds its victims. "*The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not.*" They know but little either of the ways of God, or of the needs of their own spiritual nature. The great achievements of Divine love

within the soul, and the wonders of Divine grace, are unknown to them as matters of experience; hence the knowledge of both in the way of the Cross which is largely experimental, is to them strange and unconvincing. This attitude towards spiritual truth is not uncommon; and it demands from us the clear witness of healthy spirituality. There is nothing in a spiritual life truly lived which is either unsimple or obscure.

But is the teaching of the Cross, with all its demands upon us in ways of mortification and sacrifice, true to the best instincts of our human nature? We know that all that is greatest and noblest in human life, all that is best in nations and individuals, is the fruit of the heroic virtues. We know that self-sacrifice distinguishes all who have truly loved and served their fellow-men. We honour the martyr or the hero in some noble fight, and feel that the world is the richer for their deeds. They have glorified their generation. The Cross of Jesus sanctifies this heroism, and makes it the possible glory of every life. It purifies and exalts the motives and purposes of life and supplies the right intention. It makes the glory of God the sole aim and desire; it reveals the course of pure love, and sets before us the very joy of the Redeemer, "*Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross.*"

In the way of the Cross there is the perpetual inspiration of love, which is the beginning of true

heroism. It was love which constrained our Lord and won the victory on Calvary, and it is that same love which becomes active in His faithful disciples. Love reveals first of all the possibilities of higher life, and then inclines the soul towards them. Love reveals the value of every gift, glorifies the idea of sacrifice, and leads the soul to acts of holy self-abandonment and self-donation. Love discloses the Sacred Heart of Jesus and makes known His holy desire towards us. Love impels us to give all, not for selfish gratification in the present, but for the eternal satisfaction of Divine love.

This has been the inspiration of countless deeds of simple heroism in Christian life. It has made Saints whose names are known only to God. It is to-day the secret of many a hidden life; hidden, that is, not only in the obscurity of place and station, but also beneath the activities of office, and the duties of high position. It is the love of Christ which binds their feet in the way of the Cross, and as we look upon them let us not only acknowledge their spiritual supremacy, but also be ready to recognize that they may have found the way which alone leads to true greatness —the greatness of the Saints.

3. *The soul's "passion."*

In the Passion of Jesus we see Divine love in opposition to the sin of the world. All the sorrow

of the Redeemer, His work of reparation, His Offering and Sacrifice by which He made atonement, all that made His Passion effectual, was *Love.* "*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" We are saved from sin by the operation of Divine love. We must therefore oppose sin in ourselves, and in the world, in the power of love. All true penitence springs from love. Contrition is the sorrow for sin felt by a soul in whom there is the stirring of love. But contrition is the beginning only of our action against sin. When we have gone a little further in the spiritual life and have learned more of the mystery of the Passion of Jesus, we understand that we are called to a deeper work in which His Passion is in a sense re-enacted in our own life. The more we love Him, the more we feel the sorrow of His Sacred Heart and share His pain. We sorrow for the unlove of the world, for the countless lives which are uninspired and unlovely because they are without the love of God. We sorrow most of all for our own want of love. To sorrow thus is to suffer; it is part of our rightful experience in the way of the Cross. Not for ourselves do we suffer, but for His sake. Our self-surrender, our mortifications, our efforts in the way of love, are so many acts by which we associate ourselves with Him in His great work of love. We realize

that we are in a very special way "*workers together with Him.*"

Love leads us still further and we choose the Cross. Of our own will we accept the pain of being "*crucified unto the world*"; we respond to the inner call of His love and are rewarded with the feeling of His suffering. He reserves that reward for those who love Him best, and in their spiritual life they too have their "Passion." But to the soul so favoured it is not a hardship, for the realization is itself the result of love, and love makes all the pain a joy. Who that has ever felt the pain of the Cross for very love of Christ the Beloved, would desire to lose it? And why? The essential joy of pure love which thrilled the Sacred Heart of Jesus in His Passion, passes into the soul of the Christian according to the degree and purity of his love. We may prove our love, and experience a measure of this joy of love, as from step to step we advance in the way of the Cross, identifying ourselves with our Lord. Only let us pursue our way in disregard of self; the purest love is alone worthy of our Lord Beloved; and only as we forsake ourselves do we really know Him. To know Him in "*the fellowship of His sufferings*," is the surest way to know Him in that glory of Love which is above the Cross, and which He wills to share with those who in union with Him have won the victory of love.

II

Self-surrender

Our Lord's earthly life was a continuous revelation of the Divine Love. He, the Eternal Word, imparted to men the science of Divine love, the true wisdom. But He conveyed His teaching in the terms of human experience. It was not by word only, but by the forcible expression of love manifested in perfect life, that He taught the world. Hence it is that we find in the profound simplicity alike of His words and His example that which both explains our own experience and also guides us in the ascending paths of the spiritual life.

That which is true of His life as a whole is true in particular of the hours of His Passion. On the Cross He gathered up all His words and works into the completeness of His Own purpose of love. If in the Passion we are arrested by the proofs of Divine wisdom and action, none the less may we mark how our Lord as Man declared the principles of the spiritual life. Every action was directed by His perfect adherence to principle,

as every true spiritual life is and must always be directed. The life being spiritual, the principles which govern it are also spiritual. They are simple and practical, but they are not according to the reasoning of "*the natural man.*" They are elements of Divine wisdom, and the sphere of their operation is the spiritual life. They are essentially *love*, whether we consider them as fundamentals of a truly spiritual life, as, submission to God, faith in God, choice of the Divine will, humility, and so on. Love, since it "*is of God*," seeks only God as its end, but it is expressed in many ways, all of which are in some degree effective in the self-devotion and self-donation of the whole man. Now, a perfect spiritual life is begun in self-surrender, and that was our Lord's first step in the accomplishment of His purpose through the Passion.

1. *Self-surrender is inherent in the idea of love.*

Love is the first principle of the spiritual life. As we understand it, there can be no true conception of the spiritual life apart from the love of God. Every advance in the spiritual life is an advance into the knowledge of the Divine love. Yea, it is only through love that we are able to advance at all. But this is no vague movement, dependent upon mere sentiment, as though the love we profess for God were but an emotion, a matter of feeling only, and as variable as the sunshine. It is a great deal more than that, it

is a passion which moves the whole being and deifies it. It is the life itself entering into the smallest details of volition and activity. All the powers of the soul are employed with an ever-deepening sense of personal devotion, in order that we may rightly express it. The understanding, the memory, and the will are exercised in love to the perfect delight of the soul; by all three we are moved in the way of self-surrender, because in each we have assurance of the claim of God in the revelation of love. The understanding of this claim is the beginning of a joy which is complete only in the perfect surrender of love to Love.

But this wonderful and beautiful reality of love as a spiritual force, as the master passion, is not attained save through the operation of the Holy Spirit. There are so many demands upon love, so many experiences in life, which are only understood through love. There is the whole realm of the interior life which is very dark indeed until it be illuminated by Divine love. Hence we need the guiding of the Holy Spirit through whom we come to know, so far as we can bear it, what is essential to love as it is in God and as it is to be in ourselves.

We need this particularly if we are to frame our lives according to Divine Ideals; and now especially as we try to understand some facts of our spiritual life in the light of the Passion of

our Lord. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may guide us.

First we are taught that the passion began in the self-surrender of Jesus. We may, indeed, trace it far back to the ages when, in the counsels of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, the way of human salvation was foreseen and determined upon. So the Apostle implies when he speaks of the Lamb "*slain from the foundation of the world.*" Next, there comes the realization of all in the Incarnation: "*Lo, I come, to do Thy Will, O God.*" This was the attitude of our Lord all through His life and ministry upon earth. He lived a surrendered life. The agony of His self-surrender in the Garden was but the immediate preparation for the Cross. But all through His earthly course that self-surrender is to be seen in His perfectly sustained life of love. Love must be shown in self-surrender. We may question the depth of love supported only by protestation; but when, passing beyond the use of words, love declares itself by its own self-inspired action, we have the highest proof, and self-surrender is the highest proof of all. In our Lord's case it was in self-surrender to the Father, in the realization of the essential unity of love in the Ever-Blessed Trinity. And this involved His surrender on behalf of man, since the salvation of man was bound up with the eternal purpose of love in God.

If this seems but a dry theological statement,

let us rather contemplate the love within itself—love self-realized in its own surrender, and passing over the facts of suffering in order to rest in its own completeness. Mark it in our Lord's Own action. He made His surrender to the Father, and rested always in His love, because in the completeness of His act He lived in the unity of the Divine Will above the fear of loss, but not apart from the experience of pain; He could anticipate the joy of victory even in the humiliation of the Cross: "*For the joy set before Him* [*He*] *endured the Cross, despising the shame.*"

It seems almost too pure in conception for us to attain to. We are arrested and hindered by the thought of the cost of our surrender. But as we break through all hindrances, urged by the compelling beauty of pure love, we come to see that in self-surrender lies our first claim to love. Love is true or not in proportion to our selfishness or unselfishness. This is easily understood of love in merely human relations; but when it is the spiritual life we are considering, and our relation to God, it is even more true. We cannot approach the ideal of pure love as we behold it in God, and as it is presented in the Incarnate Life of our Lord, unless we go out from ourselves, and in self-surrender rest in the eternal purposes of the Divine love. We do not understand how pure our love may be until we have thus surrendered ourselves. All clinging to ways of self-love hinders the perfect

understanding and realization of the love through which we may attain to union. Its purity and sweetness, its light and joy, cannot be known save as we are detached in loving self-surrender.

Hence the need of keeping our souls detached in continual self-surrender; and that for love's sake. Every act of love is essentially an act of self-surrender, but we should endeavour to make them more perfect in intention, and through the varied acts in daily life develop our inward sense of all that is essential to interior surrender. This practice will become in us a holy self-determination in preparation for the Cross which, if we are disciples of the Crucified, we shall not escape. "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*"

2. *It involves suffering.*

Self-surrender is perfected through suffering, which is yet its natural consequence. Self-surrender is the act of the superior will, which is ever opposed by the sensibilities of the lower nature. It is not easy to persevere in the higher way, even though we continue faithful. There are countless appeals to us from without; the ceaseless complaint of our lower nature; and all the seductive promptings of self-love. Like the Israelites of old, we scarcely enter the wilderness-way before we are troubled by some deprivation; or we long for some delight or indulgence of the

past; or we find the enemy preparing some violent attack; and even the provision which God has made for our daily strengthening loses all its savour, and we fall into a state of spiritual heaviness. Almost we could persuade ourselves that we are mistaken, that the aim is too high for us, that we had better content ourselves with a lower ideal, and leave alike the prospects and the dangers of the higher way to others. How often we have felt all this! We may even have yielded to it; and only when we have come back to the fact of our self-surrender and looked once more upon the beauty of pure love, have we understood the nature as well as the necessity of our suffering.

All that we are taught of the need of spiritual purgation comes to us then to reassure and to comfort us. We perceive that "*thus it must be.*" "*We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*" We cannot live the higher life if we suffer none of the death-pangs of the old and lower state. We can be brave to suffer if so we perceive the value of the pain, the Passion of the spiritual life.

Beyond the thought of the inner purgation of our souls which is to lead us into the state of pure love, we perceive a wondrous depth of spiritual truth; and as we patiently pursue our way, profiting by interior experience, we gradually take higher views of spiritual suffering. The Passion of Jesus has its counterpart in us if we are living

"*members of His Body*." Therefore the suffering we feel is explained by His. The deep sorrows of the Sacred Heart—the pain of His wondrous compassion—the agony of His Spirit because of the dishonour done to the Father—the distress of His Soul because of unrequited love—all these touch us from time to time; they make our pain bearable; they dignify our suffering and make us ready and even glad to suffer: "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*"

Deeper than all is the solemn mystery of love which we understand in vocation to suffering. It is thus the Beloved rewards His own for their acts of true self-surrender. He seems to develop the vocation to love in the vocation to suffering. If this seems a little more than we are prepared to accept; if it seems only to add to the discouragements of the way; it will suffice if we reply that such definite vocations to suffering are given only to those whose love is too strong to refuse the honour to which they are called.

Very wonderful is this to those who can receive it. It makes the hard thought, the bitter complaint, impossible. Love teaches us how to respond; and still it is in self-surrender, blind faith, not asking to know all His reasons why, but offering all in acts of pure love; or in acts of reparation that our response is to be made. Of Reparation we shall have to speak more particularly in a later chapter.

It may be that we in this age are being so called. The Saints knew it and rejoiced in it. And very wonderful is the proof of God's love to us which such a call implies. It is nothing less than a call to a high exercise of love; and we may be sure that with the call there will come the power to respond. Very certainly those who know most of the deep love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are called to suffer in peculiar ways, and their love explains it while they renew their self-surrender. They who love much will not be wholly free from suffering.

3. *Love is superior to suffering.*

If there were nothing beyond the suffering which the surrendered soul must inevitably experience, we might well shrink from it. We do shrink from it already, perhaps, even while we feel how ungenerous we are; but the real reason of our shrinking may be that we do not perfectly realize how love conquers fear. We thus perceive that the immediate effect of our acts of self-surrender is to promote the union of our souls to God in love, to bring us the consolation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The love we experience exalts us and fills us with the light and joy of life eternal. No suffering can destroy that, for it is too high. It may be obscured, but it cannot be destroyed. Such love is given to all who will not permit any lowering of the standard of love within their own

lives, but will maintain the supremacy of love though all else be lost. They know the exquisite joy of conquering love.

This is the general aspect of love revealed to the surrendered soul; but there is a yet deeper reality. This holy surrender of love to Love is none other than the action of the soul in response to vocation. If we may say great things of self-surrender in the way of love, taking but a general view of spiritual possibilities, how much more may we say and understand of that which is known by one who is conscious of definite vocation! The Bride-soul best knows the hallowed joy of self-surrender. To speak of it reverently, it is the joy of mutual surrender, for the love of God is given in full measure to such an one. God is not less generous than we are. He will not call a soul and fail of love's full gift when the surrender is made. The love which is so understood by the Bride-soul is far above the pain of earth. It is an eternal fact.

True, we may by our own act fall away, to our great loss and shame; but so long as the soul herself is faithful to love, preserving it inviolate, she has not only that which is above pain, but that which also enables her to endure, which gives a new joy in pain because it is understood as no longer for self alone, but for the sake of the Beloved.

Self-surrender, therefore, is the step by which

we enter into a close relationship to God and receive the sweet yet powerful inspiration of love, which through all pain and distress, rises to self-realization in union with Him. The joy of this holy inspiration is at all times very near to us, even though we may have missed it hitherto. The consciousness of it is the evidence of the loving purpose of God; and the duty of response is ever clear. Let us renew the freshest delight of our souls in the renewal of self-surrender, *i.e.* the joyous surrender of love to Love, of the soul to the Beloved.

III

Mortification

THERE is very much in the practice of the spiritual life which is not understood by the selfish and worldly-minded. Some things there are which undevout critics sometimes regard as mere eccentricities which at best are of little value as helps to the soul. Acts of mortification are, in particular, often condemned, to the distress of those who practise them. But this is not surprising when we remember that self-love and mortification are mutually opposed. We know how hard it is to deny the promptings of self-love in ourselves; and the world is ever on the side of our self-love. Our motives in all our mortifications should therefore be of the highest spiritual order if we would successfully resist the world and avoid occasions of sin. Self-surrender compels us at once to consider the necessity for mortification. We need not shrink from it; indeed, if we are wise, we shall consider it not once, but again and again as ever freshly the light of holy love illumines our souls. We do not understand the need which exists for

mortification, nor the value of the practice, until by love we have worked our way to the point whence we can judge aright and act with holy self-determination. The growing knowledge of the true nature of sin leads us, likewise, to act in definite ways, cutting off occasions of sin; and so we are again obliged to consider what is the rightful place in our lives of mortification wisely resolved upon and practised.

1. *Our attitude towards sin.*

The surrendered soul will speedly be brought face to face with sin; not only with the facts of sin, but also with the conditions of human life and human weakness which make for sin; and with the movements within and without which combine to make occasions for temptations which lead to sin. If we have made our own surrender to God truly and lovingly, we must have become aware of a new and clearer light in which our own faultiness and weakness are revealed with even painful distinctness. We cannot ignore it, for our surrender implies a separation from sin and its occasions. Thus we arrive at one of the most serious aspects of the spiritual life—our own attitude towards sin

We cannot form our own ideas, either of sin or of the attitude which we must adopt towards it. We have sinned, and that very fact renders us incapable of judging rightly of anything which is affected by sin. *We* can only judge of sin by

faculties which are more or less pervaded and weakened by that which we are judging. Sin cannot be judged impartially, except by one who stands apart from it. The Angels may judge of sin; but even their judgment falls short of that which we desire. We want to know what sin is according to the judgment of Him whom we love; to whom we have made our self-surrender. We want to know how sin appears in the light of Eternal Holiness, and Truth, and Purity, and Love. We seek to know it as it appears to God, who judges even the most secret sins, our unsuspected venial sins: "*Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee; and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.*"

We turn, then, to God, earnestly desiring to know the truth about sin, in order that our attitude towards it may be a right one in His sight.

Sin is not necessary. There was a time when no sin had marred the fairness of God's creation, or stained the pureness of the human soul, or dimmed the lustre of her innocence. But, in the wondrous dawn of the world's life, the warning about sin was spoken. The coming of sin was a catastrophe that might be threatened; and there was no hiding of the truth concerning it. Sin would merit the death-penalty: "*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" And when sin came, the completeness of the separation from God which ensued indicated, as nothing else could

do, the mind of God towards sin. He hated it. Wilful sin was an effectual bar to grace. Reconciliation and atonement were needful in order to restore the way of approach to God. The whole of the Law relating to sacrifice was enacted in order to regulate man's approach to God. Man was made to feel the penalty of his transgressions and the need of reconciliation.

If we study Holy Scripture, we perceive how deep was the pain caused by the consciousness of sin and of alienation from God. The great, loving souls who came nearest to God felt it the most. At one time it is in a wail of spiritual agony: "*How then can man be justified with God?*" "*Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.*" At another it is shown in the holy resistance of wrong; or, yet again, in lofty ways of mortification and prayer. Men like Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, acted towards sin as those whose hearts knew the burning of Divine love. Their attitude towards sin was that of those who knew the thoughts of God. They seem to anticipate the witness of the incarnate Life of Jesus. They enable us to perceive that whenever man is exalted to a true knowledge of God he exhibits a detestation of sin. This is the universal testimony, and it is peculiar to no age or period of the world's history. It witnesses to man's capacity for holiness, and declares for those whose desire is for God and Love.

When we consider our Lord's own attitude towards sin, we are led yet further in the thought of love.

Contemplate Him as He meets sin. What perfect separateness from it marks His whole attitude—even though He could be tempted! His very stainlessness witnesses to the effect of sin in the world. See Him, in love, ever One with the Father—in love sorrowing for the loss to men—and in love mortified, to teach us how sin is to be avoided. See Him, in love atoning; Himself sinless, He knows and feels the ruin of sin in all its awfulness, and, because sinless, He alone can offer the perfect human penitence without which there can be no atonement; and, loving with equal pureness, His work has eternal merit.

Thus He shows us what is to be the attitude of all souls towards sin. There must be love to God, first, exalting the soul and inspiring every effort. Love enables us to perceive the deep needs of the soul: reconciliation and grace. Love urges us forward in brave conflict with sin. Love makes plain the ways of holy detachment and mortification, and every means whereby we may become separate from sin and its occasions. The greater the love to God, the sterner and more relentless will be our action against sin. I speak not of outward action, but of our spiritual attitude towards sin, and in particular our own sin. It is our own sin which claims our thought, and by

its effect upon the soul emphasizes the need of holy spiritual effort, of insistent mortification. Our secret consciousness of sin is a safe guide to the right understanding of God's will in us concerning the character of our mortifications. They should be reasonable, and wholly opposed to our self-love. Sternness towards ourselves is not opposed to most gentle charity towards others. So the Saints have ever been. We need to be towards *sin* relentless, because towards God we are consistently and unfalteringly loving.

2. *Exterior mortification.*

When we look to our Lord as our Guide in the way of exterior mortification, what do we see? We see the evidence of intention clear, well-defined, and sustained. He lived with one object in view—the doing of the Father's will. "*Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God.*" He sought nothing which did not help forward the attainment of that end. At the same time, He could, and did, follow the social customs of His time, so far as they presented the means of reaching souls, of uplifting the hearts of men, and moving them with the nobler impulses of holy love.

It is difficult to form an idea of His mortifications without taking into consideration two opposite views which are presented to us. First, we have His own teaching. How strong He is in teaching the need of self-control, even to the

custody of the eyes and the suppression of evil thoughts! How carefully He places the care of the soul before the needs and desires of the body: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*"! How solemnly He declares the need of holy detachment: "*He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me*"! And of self-denial: "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me*"! How every detail of His teaching is reflected in His own endurance of toil, suffering, death! Over against this we place the other aspect of His Life, viz. His acceptance of hospitality: His presence at the marriage-feast; the report of His enemies, "*Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.*" We know that such words were a cruel perversion of His tender courtesy. But they help us to perceive how real was His association with all, since He came to save all.

Between these two, or rather within the latter, what do we see? A sacred, consecrating Presence, an influence in social life which lifted it up. Think of Him entering into these things because He had a work to do, but never for self-pleasing, never for gratification of any kind. Contemplate Him, faithful to the strictest precepts of His Own teaching, while yet His asceticism was not

remarked upon, perhaps scarcely even noticed, because of the holy charm of His personality.

Here we have a clearly marked line of teaching for ourselves. In our own spiritual life we are to recognize how our vocation changes the whole view of life's duties. Love is to keep us true to vocation; and whatever does not assist us to that end is to be forsaken, renounced, mortified. The application of the principle to the details of outward life is a lifelong duty. It takes a long while to separate ourselves from the love of lower things, and to mortify "all our evil and corrupt affections." But that is necessary. We need to be separated from all that hinders the free, pure love of our souls for God; from all that would dull our spiritual powers and render us unfit for His service, unfit for prayer and Communion; from all that would hold our attention, or engage our hearts, when we should be recollected in God.

To this end we practise mortification; we engage in penitential acts; we fast; we avoid certain occasions of worldly intercourse or worldly amusements. We even detach ourselves from many things, in themselves pleasing and innocent. We do all this not in order to condemn them in themselves, or to criticize any who engage in them, but because we perceive that God is calling us to something higher. He is seeking in love to attach us to Himself alone. But He secures to

us the freedom of choice; we perceive this and we know that He alone is all our desire. We cannot love Him and yet allow the world to move us against the impulses of His love.

All exterior mortifications should be practised with great humility, cheerfulness, simplicity; and, moreover, they should be as hidden as possible. St. Bonaventura says: "If, O man, you were well inflamed with the love of your Creator, you would entertain nothing to be painful or difficult that you do for Him. All things would be light and easy; they would all appear sweet and pleasant, and you would do them so willingly, as that when you had done all you would think you had done nothing; nay, you would rather think that you have done a great deal worse than if you had done nothing."[1]

The religious state is one of perpetual mortification, and to a great extent it cannot be hidden, that is, in its general character as the world regards it. But within the cloister how many are the ways in which the secret of a mortified life may be preserved! But this leads us to the thought of interior mortification.

3. *Interior mortification.*

Love alone can bear the strain of interior mortification. In exterior acts there may be some relief in the consciousness of companionship,

[1] "Goad of Divine Love," p. 144.

association, sympathy; but in interior acts there is always a tendency towards a sense of isolation, against which the lower nature rebels. The very hiddenness of the acts and dispositions involves the danger of slackness. We have but to think of some of the ways in which interior mortification has to be practised in order to understand our difficulty. The soul that is interiorly mortified is humbly obedient, hiding the natural distaste for certain duties and work; she is silent under reproof, misjudgment, or insult; she suffers in silence, and takes the ills of the body cheerfully; she denies herself both in things of the body and of the spirit, and betrays no disappointment; she resists the impulses of the lower nature, such as inclinations to self-indulgence, motives of anger, etc., without a sign of her secret pain and conflict. She wages an interior war with her own rebellious nature, and only God and the holy Angels are witnesses of her pain — the pain of spiritual mortification. Now and then we catch in some word the anguished cry of the Saints as they wrestled in loneliness, but generally it is all hidden, a secret of love and heroism, which only the Great Day will declare. How hard it has been to practise any or all of these! We have accomplished nothing without pain; indeed our efforts to mortify ourselves have but revealed a hidden capacity for suffering, or disclosed the power of self-love to inflict pain so deep and subtle that we had

despaired of ever attaining to anything in the way of perfection. But we must renew our wills in the matter; for consider, what were the motives which led us to them? Generally there has been an impulse of love as we have perceived the Divine beauty of holiness, or some pure attraction of the higher life. We have made some brave effort, but have become in time a little weary of the *lonely* struggle. And we say, "We have not the heroism of the Saints." True, but we shall never achieve anything worthy of our calling if we do not with a loving will make the attempt, and renew our wills as often as we encounter difficulties.

True heroism is in the will that continues strong even when the struggle is prolonged; and not in the mere act which for the moment expresses it. Therefore we need to consider well our failures in mortification, and recognize the spiritual needs which they disclose.

And then it is that we need to return to the first movements of love, and once again perceive the ideal of pureness, and then to renew our offering of love. Perseverance in the spiritual life is the expression of love that is never permitted to become lukewarm. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that we maintain an attitude of steadfast, yet simple, attention to God, responding by interior acts to His love. Acts of interior mortification will be but so many movements in response

to love interiorly perceived, the following of an inspiration interiorly understood.

Sometimes we shall be led to see the need of this secret mortification in *devotion;* to be willing to forego the delight in order to be *wholly dead* to self. Self-love never yet won the higher gifts of prayer; but we are so afraid to forsake ourselves and trust only to the Love of God. Yes, it is hard; but let us remember it is to be done in the effort of love to rise worthily to God. We must feel that every taint of *self-love* is unworthy of Him, and also that it weakens our spiritual power; and so love must act vigorously in order to break through the bonds of the lower nature to cast itself into the Bosom of God.

This becomes the very secret of the soul's passion in this life; she suffers, and willingly, because, like her Lord, *she loves.* The unwilling sufferer, the one whose mortification is without love, will never find the joy of the Cross. That joy springs from the love whose fire has issued from the Heart of the Beloved.

IV

Detachment

The way of our life, as we respond to the call of Love, is revealed to us as a very straight course. There are many possibilities, and even sometimes alluring suggestions, of deviation. The straight way becomes also a very narrow one, bounded by definite requirements of obedience and imperative demands of love. We cannot incline to easy ways without positive danger, and so very early we perceive the necessity for holy detachment.

But detachment appeals to us against ourselves. It is so hard to "*the natural man*" to act in opposition to his likings and affections; he argues with himself against the call which, for all his pleading, is not silenced within him. Detachment! Is it really necessary that we detach ourselves from the love of creatures if we would pursue the higher way in safety? In the way of the Cross we find our passion, and we are guided towards it by the unerring impulse of Divine love. We cannot escape it. The forward steps must be taken, and they lead us away from everything which can

hinder the free action of our spirits. The call of love comes now in one way, now in another, and we respond not without some pain or sacrifice; but love counts it as little because of that which lies beyond. And so when love calls to detachment, the soul will be ready to leave all for the sake of the Beloved.

1. *The call to detachment.*

We do not proceed far in the ways of the spiritual life before we understand that we are called to holy detachment. It is a call both unmistakable and imperative. It is the only way by which we may reach our ideal of love and devotion, and so long as that ideal of love is exalted as the goal of all effort, so long does detachment appeal to us. The way of holy detachment is light and attractive when bathed in the glory of our ideal, and we should indeed make as much of it as possible, for sooner or later we shall realize that it is not the way of the world. And more than that, we shall find it an exclusive way; it is not the way of compromise. It is a mystic way, a way of prayer and mortification; a way which diverges ever further and further from those commonplaces of the world's way which at first we felt we might lawfully retain for use or pleasure. So many have started on the way of detachment, apparently with the idea that they might set their own standard, and be a law unto

themselves; but such a course is foredoomed to disappointment, if not to positive disaster. There is no limit but that of love, and love has no limits. It is to this way we are called, but not all at once shall we understand the cost of true response. Can we leave the attractions, the friendships, the social intercourse, the ways of the world, the popular cause, the thought of the day, just to be alone and free to concern ourselves with the things of God and eternity? The pain of response is felt, as one by one these things have to be left. When we have to refuse a seemingly harmless pleasure, or risk the misjudgment of the world, or even of friends, we shall suffer—yes, again and again, till our love has attained to too great a power to be moved from its purpose.

Again, there is the pain of our own mistakes, when we suffer for any unfaithfulness to the ideal. But often it is through this pain alone that souls learn the truth of God's demand; and this is the case where they are unwilling through self-love to forego personal gratification and follow the leading of God in true poverty of spirit. Or, yet again, there is pain when we come to days of deep interior loneliness, when old desires are denied, but not absent; when the senses rebel, when all the sensitive part is on the side of that which we must renounce; when we are not so truly free as to be able to realize all that God wills to be to us in love.

In such hours of loneliness how we need the support of our Guardian Angels, and the prayers of the Saints! It is our trial time. The way which looked so beautiful has lost its brightness; but it is only that the shadows of lurking self-love have darkened it. We must make no mistake. We fear to make the plunge into the darkness because of its seeming density; but in truth we shall find the light, for we shall but leave the dark envelopment of our pride.

Through all this we are to understand that the call to detachment is God's call to us to follow Him into the way wherein He will give us of Himself. We are to receive through the very pain of our trial the intimation of the will of God, and also we should be encouraged to fresh contemplation of His holiness. We do desire Him, and He wills to satisfy us in Himself; but He cannot perfectly communicate His love while our hearts are attracted to strange love, or held captive to the fleeting fancies of time. There is needed an entire denudation of spirit if we would enjoy the perfect delight of the Divine union.

A further thought is that He calls us to the higher life in order that we may do *His* will, and we must go out to Him in order that we may learn that will. Compare with this all that is recorded for us of such great Saints as Elijah, St. John the Baptist, and St. Paul. Great was their knowledge of God, and clear their understanding

of His will; and their response to Him was that of love which rose true and strong above every earthly attraction. The more earnestly they responded to Divine love the more they despised the things of the world. Mark the evidence of their love in every development of their lives. How diligently they sought to perfect their detachment! How great was their reward in love!

Above all, see this in our Lord. How He sought the opportunities when He could be alone in perfect detachment, so that not even a passing disturbance of the senses might hinder His perfect Self-realization. Sometimes it is needful to go apart in order to realize our vocation; to be able in stillness and solitude, to hear the call of God and receive the deep communications of His will. There cannot be perfect detachment of spirit if there be no carefulness about detachment from outward things. It is easy to become self-deceived. We may flatter ourselves that all is well with us, that at heart we are all right, that we need no special aids in the way of detachment, that we are not weak in will as others. But the revelation of our true need will surely come, and not improbably through humiliation. "*Be not high-minded, but fear.*"

Moreover, detachment is perfected by close attention to details, in the deliberate putting away of all that delights the senses, all that we feel is

holding us back in the desire of possession and enjoyment.

The Religious Life is one of very complete detachment from outward things, at least in *act.* The hardness is experienced in meeting the inner difficulties of the spirit; but it is precisely that spiritual part which claims our closest attention. The outward part has but little value if it does not assist us to the interior state of spiritual detachment.

2. Detachment of the Cross.

Jesus calls us into the way of the Cross: "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*" The way of the Cross is the way of holy detachment; but it is a detachment perfected through suffering. The Cross must be endured, and we cannot be parted from it until the whole purpose of love has been wrought out in the passion of the soul. We cannot know the meaning, or the purpose, of this way of the Cross except we know something of the Passion of Jesus. When we understand the meaning and purpose of His Cross we are able to look upon our own without repulsion; and when He indicates the position or nature of our cross, we shall not simply touch it and turn away, but rather shall we raise that cross, embrace it, and bear it, and be offered upon it for love of Him.

Every step of His way during His thirty-three

years was towards the Cross. In His early years that goal was hidden from the eyes of the multitude; but to Himself it was always the point of conflict towards which He moved. And was it not that for which He even prepared Himself, and that deliberately, by excluding everything that might obscure it? Did He not even with most loving care make it the secret of many a solemn word of instruction in the deeper ways of the spiritual life?[1]

In His outward life also this became more evident as the days passed. More and more He was left alone with the few who were faithful. The growing suspicion and ill-will of the Jews marks His Own steadfast purpose of detachment. Thus we see Him on His way, the last journey, when "*He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.*" Again how strikingly evident was His interior determination! Nothing availed to avert His gaze, or to turn His will; not even the horror of the Agony in Gethsemane, nor the Cross on Calvary. But see how to Him the Cross was the completion of His detachment. Cast out by the world; lifted up above it, as though unworthy of a place in it; not a possession, not a companion, left; alone, in unutterable loneliness, He was left to agonize and to die. And yet within it all He was strong in the love eternal, knowing that His love was immortal. He bore the agony of detachment even to the

[1] St. Matt. x. 38; xvii. 24, etc.

blackness of the Dereliction: "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"

Dwell upon all this and learn that in detachment love stands in all its essential purity for God to delight in. We have our pain, for we are in the way of the Cross. Our care must be to preserve the integrity of love. Our efforts so to do will take us further and deeper into the way of detachment, for we shall find ourselves more and more separated from all things, both exterior and interior, which darken love.

When we are in pain, or distress of body or of spirit, we may welcome the result in a more complete separation, but let us *use* our opportunities. How? We should seek through our own cross to be more and more conformed to the life and purpose of our Lord. True love will rise to this, as the fruit of our pain is found in clearness of light and pureness of desire. Perhaps the most certain result of suffering, of whatsoever kind, to the soul who appropriates it in love is this: a consciousness of detachment which makes the Divine Presence a greater joy, and leads unto a closer identification of the soul with the purposes of God—whether towards the self or towards others.

Thus the separation of the Cross is not a separation unto suffering as an occasion of depression, sadness, gloom; but rather is it to be welcomed as a means of identification with the

purpose of God, and so of yet closer sympathy with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

3. *Detachment of love.*

The detachment of the Cross is an effect of love. But we must go yet further and consider the detachment which is the effect of love within itself. Love inclines to its object. The more Divine and spiritual the object, the more pure and interior is the movement of love by which the soul is detached. Thus the secret detachment of the soul is effected through many ways and degrees of purgation. The Divine union is not consummated until the soul has attained to a high degree of purity. But that cannot be so long as we are not detached, separated from those elements of earthly life which make for sin.

Little by little this is attained; for, as love increases, and as the acts of love and aspiration are made with true apprehension of the Divine life, we feel the reality of love's detachment, and long to be only purer and more free to serve in the ways of love without distraction. The loving soul desires the gift of contemplation, and no hindrance to the attainment of that desire can be endured, because it is a dishonour to the Beloved if we hold back when He invites us to that whereby our love may most of all be expressed to His glory. This holy state is directly the result of the Divine acceptance of her love. God accepts with

most tender proofs of His Own love that which He has perfected in the soul He loves. The soul is delighted with the higher gifts of contemplation. So St. John of the Cross says of the soul thus perfected in detachment: "In the solitude of perfect detachment from all things, wherein it lives alone with God—there He guides it, moves it, elevates it, to Divine things. He guides the understanding in the perception of Divine things, because it is now detached from all strange and contrary knowledge, and is alone. He moves the will freely to love Himself, because it is now alone, disencumbered from all other affections. He fills the memory with Divine knowledge, because that also is now alone, emptied of all imaginations and fancies. For the instant the soul clears and empties its faculties of all earthly objects, and from attachments to higher things keeping them in solitude, God immediately fills them with the invisible and Divine; it being God Himself Who guides it in this solitude."[1] And again he speaks of the high results of this holy detachment. The Beloved seems to take that soul most wonderfully under His own direction and care. "The reason is that He finds the soul alone in its solitude, and therefore will not give it another companion, nor will He entrust His work to any other than Himself. There is a certain fitness in this; for the soul having abandoned all things,

[1] "St. John of the Cross," Sp. Cant. xxxv. 5.

and passed through all the ordinary means, rising above them unto God, God Himself becomes the guide, and the way to Himself. The soul in solitude and detached from all things, having now ascended above all things, nothing can now profit or help it to ascend higher except the bridegroom Word Himself, Who, because enamoured of the bride, will Himself alone bestow these graces on the soul."[1] Here is the reward of all the suffering willingly borne in love. Herein is the joy of our Lord in the victory of the Cross communicated to the faithful soul. The pain of all has become joy in the completeness of her separation unto Him.

Perhaps in the beginning, as we are led into the way of detachment, something of this perfected joy is experienced by anticipation, for the happiness of the soul is very great when in simplicity of love the call of the Beloved is heard and responded to; and we do well to rejoice, and even to strengthen ourselves in joyful anticipation, so that the darker days may do no more than cast their shadows over the way wherein we follow in the footsteps of the Crucified.

[1] Ibid., Sp. Cant. xxxv. 7, 8.

V

Loneliness

One of the most certain experiences in the spiritual life is the feeling which we have, after every definite advance that we make, that we have but gone forward to fresh conflict, or to new interior trials. We realize afresh how real must be our conformity to the Passion of Jesus if love is to be victorious. But this is more than a sense of impending trial, for every step in the way of the Cross leads to fuller understanding of ourselves. Those deep and secret ways of temptation which we perceive are in their degree indications of the greatness of the human soul; and to know ourselves is essential to a right attitude towards interior trials. These, as we meet with them in the way of perfection, are usually the consequences of our own right action. They are not, therefore, to be regarded as discouragements, although that is often our first feeling towards them. The knowledge that we have acted rightly is to be our encouragement in the presence of the new demands. God will not forsake us, but having confirmed us in one holy purpose, will sustain us for the next.

If we are following closely the footsteps of our Lord in His Passion, we shall perceive the necessity for our deepening trials. He had made His act of self-surrender, and lo, He was immediately forsaken. We have made our acts of self-surrender and detachment, and quickly, it may be, we are oppressed with a sense of loneliness. We had not realized how truly a soul advances by means of its spiritual acts; we had not estimated the fact that a definite act of detachment really separates us in spirit from old conditions of life, and that henceforth we must live apart, and spiritually enclosed. Thus we find the sense of spiritual loneliness oppressive until in the ways of Divine love we have found purer attractions, and have filled the void with holier activities and associations. But in order to attain to this, we shall surrender ourselves to the pain of this loneliness, howsoever it comes; and in particular we shall surrender ourselves to it in the ways which are most evident to us as we mark the agony of our Lord's Soul in His Passion.

Our Lord had foreseen the loneliness of the Cross: "*The hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.*" It was more than an accident of the Passion; it was of the essence of His suffering. His suffering would not have been complete without it. Perhaps we may even say it was necessary to the manifestation of His love,

which through the Passion rose in solitary majesty appealing to the world. It is evident, even to the last cry from the Cross; and it guides us to the understanding of our own spiritual loneliness which we experience most commonly in penitence, and prayer, and suffering.

1. *In penitence.*

We cannot conceive of loneliness more profound than that of our Lord as *the Penitent.* Contemplate Him burdened with the whole weight of human sin. He took that sin, not according to our personal knowledge of it, for the most contrite soul has after all but a limited knowledge even of its own sin. But Jesus took the whole burden of every soul, even the worst and most sinful. We may try to imagine what must have been the horror and loathing of His Soul as He submitted to that burden; we may think of nameless sins, of shameless cruelty, of unspeakable wrongs, of triumphant pride; but we can never even think of the worst, for we know nothing of the anguish of souls crying in obscurity, bearing their wrongs to the throne of eternal justice. We cannot know the secret evil, the hidden malice of sin, nor know it as God knows it. But our Divine Lord bore the burden of sin, and offered His contrition for it, as it is in the sight of God. *He alone knew the sin of the world.* He was alone in unspeakable loneliness of perfect sorrow because He alone had

perfect knowledge. "*I looked for some to have pity on Me, but there was no man; neither found I any to comfort Me.*"

We, too, must endure the loneliness of penitence. Our sin is our own. It is even all that is strictly our own. The knowledge of it, the pain and deep compunction we may feel on account of it, will likewise be our own; no one may intrude into the awful secrecy of our consciousness. We confess our sin, knowing that the very priest who hears us cannot enter that enclosure wherein we are alone with our sin. He absolves us in God's name, and the healing follows, and the peace of God reigns in our hearts; yet he is apart; we are alone in peace, as we were alone in guilt.

This loneliness in penitence is most blessed. The Holy Spirit of Grace leads us into it in order that we may truly know and feel our sin; and the more truly the soul loves, the more deeply does He guide into the depths of self-knowledge. He takes the detached soul, leads it into the Divine light, shows its wonderful possession in God, until ashamed and confounded it lies in the pain of contrition before the vision of eternal love. Then were it not that love sustains it, it might well despair of attaining to the purity which God requires. But love purifies while it chastens, and the knowledge of sin which seems to drive the soul into unutterable loneliness is followed by

such knowledge of God, and of the infinite beauty of His love, as to awaken within it an intense longing to be cleansed. "*Cleanse Thou me from my secret faults*," not only from my known sins, but from the secret taint and imperfections perceived by Thee alone, seen now, known now, as in that hour when the pain of them all pierced the Heart of the Crucified.

If in the loneliness of our penitence we are led into the secret knowledge of our own unworthiness, if we realize that for our sin we deserve to lose God for ever, there is still no hopelessness; for at the point where we feel our unutterable misery, we are met by the Beloved Himself in the tenderness of that love which constrained Him to endure the dereliction. And so from the very extremity of spiritual need we are called to contemplate the love which triumphed on the Cross. We even feel it as a simple personal love directed towards ourselves. We are alone in penitence, we are alone in the new and special experience of love wherein we know that He died for love of us: "*He loved me, and gave Himself for me.*" We begin a fresh advance in the way of love. We pray with a new consciousness of our place in the Heart of Christ; we feel the tenderness of God. Prayer becomes a delight and for a while will attract us and call for particular care. But again we find the loneliness of the Passion. We must be conformed to the Passion through our prayer.

2. *In prayer.*

There is no sanctity without love. There is no prayer without love. Every achievement of the Saints is the work of love. The Cross is the test of love. Love is always tested by difficulties in prayer, and not the least is that of loneliness in our prayer. But we should see it first in the Passion of Jesus if we would respond to the test and prove our own love. Think of our Lord, He was alone in His perfection as Man; in every spiritual act, in every prayer He was alone, none but He could offer a perfect prayer. Alone in the singleness of His holiness, He was yet more strikingly alone in His prayer during His Passion. Even the consolation of the sympathy of His blessed Mother whose prayer, next to His Own, was ever the purest, He willed not to retain by keeping her beside the Cross; but by dismissing her He rather intensified His Own loneliness. Most of all alone He endured the dereliction: "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" He revealed the fact that for the prayer of perfect union there is needed the utter noughting of the self in willing acceptance of the consequences of sin.

We are lonely in our prayer because we are imperfect in love. We are detached from much that tempted us to love of the world, we are inclining more and more to ways of devotion, and we are not strangers to spiritual consolation. But for all this we have our times of loneliness and

secret pain of spirit; and then the world tempts us, or we desire some selfish gratification. Prayer is difficult and there is no sweetness in it, darkness envelops the soul, we are cut off from all encouragement, alone! All our spiritual efforts, our detachment from creatures, our aspirations after Divine things, seem to have led us only into this darkness of loneliness in which prayer itself, once our joy, has become our misery.

Let us look away from ourselves. Let the present pass from view. Let us contemplate the darkness on Calvary. See the Lord Beloved, scarcely visible in the darkness around His Cross. His Soul, too, is in darkness. His prayer, yes, even *His* prayer—is without its accustomed joy. The Father's face is hidden. Forsaken and cast out by the world, and now bereft of the light of the Father's presence, He is *alone*, and the anguish of His Soul in that loneliness none will ever tell. The secret of His pain is the secret of love's agony which is known only in the incommunicable consciousness of the Ever-blessed Trinity.

Consider the Incarnate Lord in His loneliness and His love. Think of the Father contemplating Him, and in Him the very glory of His own eternal Love. Think how love wrought powerfully in the loneliness, how prayer prevailed in the darkness. The cry that rent the Heavens, proclaimed the constancy of deathless love. He, the Father's Well-beloved, was for the time shut in by

the darkness which was more awful than that which even the greatest of the Saints have experienced, and separated in loneliness which no human desolation has ever equalled. In darkness and loneliness His prayer was as a cry in the night which met with no response. But for all the silence and loneness there remained the Divine certainty of the Hypostatic Union, and from the human Soul of the Redeemer there rose the cry which through its agony breathes the surest confidence, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"

We suffer in our degree in loneliness and darkness, and we are tempted to sink down in dull misery until the cloud passes and once again we may enjoy the light of Heaven. This is a fatal mistake. We gain nothing, but rather lose through our faint-heartedness. If, indeed, through the mercy of God, we are raised again to light and to renewed opportunities of grace, we have yet missed the glory and joy of the victory which we might have won through love. Faith should bear us on when no sensible consolation is permitted us. Though our prayers seem not to pierce the gloom by which we are encompassed, yet God abides for ever. Faith must prevail over the love of consolation, faith in God Who cannot fail, that in self-abandonment rests all upon Him. There is something greater than our personal gratification to be sought. Jesus looked on to the victory of love, and we must do the same.

The hour of our trial will test the strength of our love. If our love be true, and our spiritual perception clear, we shall know that beyond us there lies the way to yet higher attainments. This loneliness in prayer, as it perfects our detachment, also prepares us for a certain high knowing of God which cannot be ours before we have learned to know ourselves. And does not God wait for this? As certainly as the victory of Jesus was followed by the exaltation of His sacred Humanity, so the victory of the soul through loneliness in prayer is followed by increased power and spiritual capacity. But the loneliness is not experienced in prayer without the accompaniment of suffering, which we must next consider. The heights are for those who in all ways have learned to walk in the valleys. Humility also has its depths, the greatest of which are fathomed only by those whose vocation is to the high places of the Saints.

3. *In suffering.*

"To be nothing and to suffer!" Such was the understanding of one to whom the depths of humility were disclosed. How often have souls trembled before the certainty of suffering who have yet borne humiliations. How often have we felt glad in our detachment, and joyful in our mortifications, and yet have been unable to welcome the call to suffering. The distress which we feel is

due, at least in part, to our own unpreparedness. We have not estimated beforehand the consequences of our self-surrender and detachment. We have not expected that God would prove us as He is doing, that He would test our love by trial upon trial. But what is it that we desire? Do we want to love Him with purest love? Do we want to behold Him in all the preparedness of a pure heart? Then we must see the need of trial and be ready to submit willingly, and with great love, because of that which is set before us. The higher our aspirations the more certain will be the trial. The condition is ever the same for those who would be nearest their Lord. *"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

The more closely we follow our Lord in the way of the Cross the more certain will be the suffering. We cannot pursue our way in opposition to the world, and not suffer. We shall be misjudged and evil spoken of, we shall be neglected and despised, and perhaps also persecuted; all the while knowing that we must endure the pain in silence. It would be vain to try to justify ourselves before the world, for our motives and ideals are not those of the world. Yea, the very pain which we feel is not that of which we can speak to the world; for who can impart the secret of the soul's pain endured beneath the very steadfastness which confounds the wisdom of man? Who can

tell the suffering of the soul in its patience, the pain that continues notwithstanding the confidence with which it waits for the victory of love? We understand it only as we discern the impress of the Cross upon the life in which the Passion of Jesus is thus mystically renewed. Look more deeply into that life, mark the development of love, and there may be found a yet deeper source of pain than the sense of personal wrong. There is a deep realization of all that the sin of the world, the sin of individuals, has caused of sorrow to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This to the loving soul is the deepest pain, and of all the most sanctifying. It is a pain of pure love. And yet it is that from which no faithful lover of Jesus can ever ask to be freed; for is it not a joy so to suffer since love is proved in self-sacrifice?

But all this is yet less than the most perfect suffering to which Saints have been called. There is yet consolation in such suffering, but pure suffering is without relief. Sometimes souls are led into loneliness of suffering, left to suffer without consolation; but only heroic souls experience this in any great degree. We may have from time to time a brief experience of it, enough to test the purity of our growing love; but few are called to endure its greatest pain. Those only whose love can bear the strain, and through the agony rise to greater purity, are permitted to share that pain of the Dereliction. It is hard to bear the

dark loneliness in our prayer, but when to that is added the loneliness of spiritual suffering, no one but our Lord Himself can know the soul's desolation. This has often been the experience of Saints. As the darkness enveloped Calvary and shrouded the agony of the Beloved, so the dark loneliness of their souls is never penetrated—so perfect is their conformity to their Lord. But as the light prevailed around His Cross after the Dereliction, so light comes to these brave souls; and we can perceive a little of their experience through the wonderful love which speaks through their after life and words. In the depths of their soul-agony they found that which, when the light broke in upon them, revealed some of the most profound of the hidden mysteries of Divine love. Their love was rewarded with Love.

If to spiritual suffering is added physical pain, we do but recognize a closer bond uniting us to our crucified Lord. In bodily suffering, as with spiritual, there is always that which cannot be told, a degree of sensible distress which is all our own. Often, too, there is a clouding over of spiritual perceptions, a weakening of the powers both of mind and body, with much distress at the loss to ourselves of interior consolation through failure in prayer and devotion. But if we have formed the habit of prompt submission to God in the desire to glorify Him by all means at all times, we shall see in all the loneliness and separation

of pain and sickness a means to an end, and that end the entire conformity of ourselves to our Lord through our suffering. There will be for us in the loneliness of pain, as in that of darkness in prayer, a way for the triumph of love, the way which is sure, the way of love.

Thus then is the loneliness of the Passion, as we experience it, found to be but the means by which we are led from step to step into the depth of love, from whence there spring new wonders of spiritual life. Truly God is "*glorified in His Saints.*"

VI

Loneliness (*continued*)

It will be necessary in this chapter to endeavour to trace some of the effects of this loneliness upon a soul devoted to God. We cannot experience this loneliness without advancing in humility, and at the same time becoming more securely settled in holy detachment. We look upon all outward things with eyes no longer seeking an earthly vision. We have beheld diviner things, we have contemplated the secret workings of Divine love, and though compelled to engage in the concerns of the world our hearts are elsewhere. The very loneliness which at first terrified us became to us later a condition, or state, of great peace, for we escaped the torment of self-love. We were brought to nothing; and then "face to face with the nothingness of the creature," we viewed our imperfections and our failures, and knew the truth about ourselves. But there was more than this. Higher than all self-knowledge, we advanced to fuller knowledge of God. We understood, but we could not reason; God looked upon us and penetrated our being with a ray of

His love; we understood, we knew; and though we have made no protestations, and formed no particular resolutions, we are more certain of our way, and we follow on love-guided towards the glory which we have seen.

If we reflect, we find but one desire as to our outward life; we want only to perfect our detachment in all ways of thought and action, in order to correspond to that pure ideal of life which we beheld when, in loneness as to sensible things, we turned to behold and to hearken in the presence of God. The very experience which at the first was so painful to our unmortified nature taught us more of God's way with souls in prayer and in the higher spiritual activities than we had previously any clear idea of. In the suffering through which we have passed, or may be passing, we have found it often impossible to do anything but remain still and attentive to God, letting our misery appeal to Him when our efforts to elicit acts of love and faith were in vain. We have understood that communion with God passes the range of thought and speech, and is to be realized in purely spiritual ways. All this we learn, scarcely knowing that we do so, in the loneliness of our penitence, our prayer, and our suffering.

It is only when in more normal ways we try to pray, and to revive some treasured memory of our devotion, or to feel again some touch of Divine joy which has been granted to us, that we

perceive how much better our prayer was in those days when we suffered in loneliness. We are led to persevere in prayer, to aspire to pure love, to forsake ourselves in the single desire to find the love which is ever attracting us to itself. This leading is, indeed, Divine, and we should respond in all simplicity; for what is it but the passing of the soul from the pain to the joy of the Cross; what but the sweet breaking in upon its loneliness of a new sense of life and love in which its loneness is swallowed up in union? It is not, indeed, as yet, a settled, but rather a divinely hopeful, state. Before us are difficulties, but beyond them all is the clear light of God, and we can be brave, for have we not the inspiration of love? What is loneliness when God satisfies the soul? Can we not be glad on account of that element in our passion, since it teaches how best we may find Him, and hold Him? As with the Bride in the Canticle, so with the faithful soul now; it is in the loneliness of detachment and mortification that we find Him Whom we love,[1] and that very knowledge should lead us to perfect ourselves in interior detachment, and to separate ourselves from all that can hinder us from corresponding fully to the teaching of the Cross. We will consider this from the point of view of the exercise of the three powers of the soul: the understanding, the memory, and the will.

[1] Cant. iii. 1–4.

1. *The understanding.*

"*I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" This enlargement follows upon true detachment from the things of the world, and from all that would cramp and hinder the spiritual life; it is one result of our conformity to the Passion of Jesus. To have felt the loneliness of the Passion, to have been led into it as a condition of learning, to have been awakened through that experience to higher spiritual realities than we had previously understood, is to have found a new world. And yet it is not wholly a strange world, for we have power to adapt ourselves to its conditions and its life. The heart is enlarged, we are moved to a new generosity of holy love, our capacity for God is increased. He alone can satisfy, Heavenly things alone can delight us. Our prayer is different; it is no longer an exercise which wearies us, but rather we are exalted and refreshed by it. We pray in a higher way, our understanding is more fruitful. We pray with the spirit, and more often in the wordless communion of love. We live more truly the spiritual life, and prove it as our true life. The old ways and methods of devotion which once satisfied us, or rather which sufficed for us in earlier stages of our progress, no longer assist us; we have outgrown them. It is therefore necessary to understand the way by which the Holy Ghost is leading us.

We are not yet established in the higher ways, but we are able to perceive them as they lead to yet more lofty heights of spiritual perfection. Our duty is to respond with all loving carefulness to this proof of God's love to us, to make good the steps by which He has led us hitherto. And as we contemplate the immediate spiritual outlook, we are encouraged by the sense of keener joy in the exercise of the three great powers of the soul, the understanding, the memory, and the will. And first of all we observe that the understanding is clearer. In the loneliness of the Cross we lost some of the old pleasure which the exercise of this power was wont to give us. We were accustomed to delight in many things which only limited the range of our spiritual vision; but now the light of Divine truth has parted the veil, and we perceive without effort whatever the Holy Ghost presents to our understanding.

In this way the understanding works without reasoning. We have intuitions of holiness, we do not reason about them, but we understand, we know. But this could not be if the power of understanding had not been mortified in suffering. We have of ourselves, we think, striven to exercise this power always with a view to the highest ends; but not all our own efforts could have been enough; God Himself led us into the way of the Cross, disciplined us in loneliness, until with clearer spiritual vision we were prepared for the

higher way. And if we pursue that way, having now entered upon it, we must yet further train and discipline the soul in all its powers. For higher attainment there is needed an ever-increasing purity of soul, and for that an even closer union with our Lord in His Passion.

But if we are inclined to treat this matter as one of simply natural life, we shall make no advance whatever. It belongs to the supernatural life, which is the true life of the Christian. If we have by nature the power of understanding in the soul, we have also from the Holy Ghost the supernatural gift of understanding. When we use this gift aright we exercise our power of understanding in a supernatural way. Until we receive this Divine gift we cannot receive perfectly God's revelation to ourselves. It is to us as the burning coal with which the seraph touched the lips of Isaiah, after which he could bear to look upon the Heavenly vision;[1] or like the angelic touch by which Daniel was strengthened to receive the message of God.[2] We cannot bear the vision unless we are replenished with the gift of understanding. "When a man possesses this gift, he has a certain Divine instinct for perceiving rightly revealed truths and understanding them. It enables the soul to apprehend supernatural things, not only by the simple assent given them through faith, or by study and research according to science, but by experience

[1] Isa. vi. 6. [2] Dan. x. 18.

and by a taste for Divine things, which gives a habitual union with God. . . . The gift of understanding is a kind of Divine light, by virtue of which the soul enters in some manner, as it were by instinct, into the object of its faith, to know its nature, its reasons, its relations and its convenience or utility."

Such is the power of the understanding aided by the Holy Ghost. It increases as in union with Jesus crucified we are mortified as to our old corrupt nature, and prepared in humility and pure love for its exercise in supernatural ways.

2. *The memory.*

The way of the Cross is the way of death to the old nature. In the loneliness of the Passion, as we experience it within ourselves, we die to many things that were very pleasing to us in our unmortified state. And this death, although we will it, is not without pain and humiliation to us. But we have to perceive the necessity for this painful denuding of the soul, and the emptying of its powers. We cannot while engrossed in natural things be exercised in supernatural ways, therefore we must die to all that hinders the higher exercise. We are inwardly and divinely taught through successive experiences, of which one of the most striking, and often unexpected, is a strange weakness and emptiness of the memory. Sometimes this is felt in relation to everyday

concerns, but more often in the inner life of the soul; for interiorly there may be a deep sense of not knowing, of being unable to make use of the fruits of learning and experience, that the memory has been emptied of "all its knowledge and reflections."[1] We cannot do anything of ourselves to renew any former impressions. Reading is profitless and mental efforts are vain, although mistaking the cause of our trouble we may turn to one or the other for relief. But we must not forget that we are in the way of the Cross, and that relief must not be sought in leaving it.

If over the past of learning and experience there rests a cloud of forgetfulness, we should of ourselves at least not try to remove it. We are even counselled to put a cloud of forgetfulness between ourselves and all creatures, in order that we may not wilfully interpose anything between ourselves and God who is prepared to teach us in the higher ways of the spirit. If in the loneliness of the Cross we are compelled to remain apart from creatures, and from all matters of self-pleasing, let us not hinder the work of God by deliberately returning to them in the very hour when He wills to illuminate our souls, and impart to us Heavenly knowledge. The memory needs to be thus emptied in order that it may, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, be exercised in supernatural ways.

[1] Cf. St. John of the Cross, D.N., Bk. ii. chap. viii.

This gift of the Holy Ghost is, of course, that of knowledge, a supernatural light enabling us to perceive the truth of God in ways whereby faith is nourished and love increased. We speak easily and confidently of knowing God, but who of us can adopt the words of the apostle without a fear of being unreal: "*I know whom I have believed*"? And yet it is this supreme knowledge, which is a high knowing of God, for which we are prepared by being first shown the poorness of all other knowledge without the revelation of Him by whom "*all things consist.*" St. Paul could "*count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,*" for Whom he had "*suffered the loss of all things.*"[1] He must have reflected upon his own great learning, and have known something of that to which St. John of the Cross refers when he speaks of the memory being "purified from all its knowledge and reflections." Really the two sides of this experience act and re-act upon one another. Guided by the Holy Ghost in the discipline of the Cross, the soul desires the knowledge of God; and likewise, moved by the revelation of God, it sets a lower value upon all other knowledge. It is the experience of the Saints and of all who faithfully respond to "*the gift and calling of God.*"

This high knowing of God fills the soul with great delight. The soul drinks as it were of the

[1] Cf. Phil. iii. 7–11.

fountain of Divine wisdom, and finds a satisfaction beside which all its former experience is as nothing. "This draught of God's most deep wisdom makes the soul forget all things of this world, and consider all its previous knowledge, and the knowledge of the whole world besides, as pure ignorance in comparison with this knowledge."

"For a clearer understanding of this, we must remember that the most regular cause of the soul's ignoring the things of the world, . . . is, that it is informed by a supernatural knowledge, in the presence of which all natural and worldly knowledge is ignorance rather than knowledge. For the soul in possession of this knowledge, which is most profound, learns from it that all other knowledge not included in this knowledge is not knowledge, but ignorance, and worthless. We have this truth in the words of the Apostle when he said that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."[1]

In these days of widely diffused knowledge there is the danger of forgetting the supremacy of Divine knowledge. All cannot be theologians, but all may have a clear knowledge of God, a knowledge which is deeply rooted in experience, and to that every Christian should attain. But in order that we may do so we must attend to the leading of the Holy Spirit in the ways of our life, both inward and outward. If we aspire to the knowledge of God we shall find no season, or occasion, unfruitful; but most of all shall

[1] St. John of the Cross, S.C. xxvi. 10, 11.

we grow in knowledge when, understanding the teaching of the Cross, we turn from old attractions to find our only satisfaction in God.

3. *The will.*

We cannot have gone thus far in the way of Divine Knowledge without being profoundly moved in the way of love. To have understood the Divine revelation, to have been led away from all satisfaction in creatures, that is but to realize that only one course of spiritual action is open to us, and that the full and sustained response of the will. That glorious life which we are contemplating must become our own. We must will the highest, and that to the uttermost of our power in holy self-determination. We have felt the first impulse of this holy, loving will in the very hour of our loneliness, when through the darkness and the pain we discerned the tender rays of Divine love. As we have entered into the very darkness with our Lord, and have understood through our own distress the deep sorrow of His Sacred Heart, as through His sympathy we have felt the power of His personal love, our wills have been guided towards a higher degree of devotion. The will is not unaffected by all that is given to the understanding and the memory; but also it is moved by direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The soul while perceiving the beauty and the fulness of the heavenly life which opens out as the earthly loses for us its

attractiveness, is conscious of very sweet impulses of love affecting the will, not depriving it of its proper and independent action, but assisting it in its choice of the highest. These impulses are those of Divine love, and they are so wondrously identified with the soul's own love, yea, are so truly the origin of that love, that we may be said truly to love with the Divine love, since without its operation we could not love at all. "*We love Him because He first loved us.*"

Love having thus taken possession of the soul, its action through all its powers is that of love. And most especially is this true of the will. Contemplate the upward way of love and the expanse of Divine beauty which the soul traverses in the holy exercise of the will. What marvellous illumination, what holy and pure intuition of Divine things are granted as steadfastly the soul pursues its way. How the understanding and the memory share the joy which rewards the right exercise of the will. It is ours to know all this, even as it was given to the Saints.

But there is for this power of the will, as for the understanding and memory, an enabling gift of the Holy Ghost. The gift is that of wisdom. This is very closely allied to that of understanding. St. Bonaventura explains this clearly: "God is sovereignly good and sweet, and everything that flows from Him is equally so; . . . when the understanding has begun to be enlarged in the knowledge

of the truth, the palate of the soul begins to delight itself in what it perceives, and experiences a sweet savour, for wisdom is the understanding in a state of relish for Divine things. And although all the faculties of the soul have their own perceptions, love dominates them by giving them its own form, especially when it is united to the Sovereign Good."

No one could declare the splendour of the gift, or describe the rapture of the soul responding in the purest exercise of the will. "The wisdom that descends to us from above is the splendour of the truth in the delightful sense of good. Having God for its chief object, as He is the true good that attracts our will to Him, it draws us to love God, and to delight in Him. Wherefore the gift of wisdom is a supernatural habit infused into the soul by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to know, to love, and to delight in God." [1]

How wonderful, therefore, is the exaltation of the soul through the exercise of the will, guided and enabled by the Holy Ghost. Hence it is that we attain to holiness through the perfect action of the will in union with that of God, Who in love so declares Himself to the soul that it finds no rest until the union of wills is perfected. What a glorious result; what marvellous fruit of suffering. Blessed suffering, since it enables us to forsake the world and to choose the things of God! Blessed fruit of the loneliness of the Cross which

[1] St. Bonaventura.

has led us to the secret knowledge of Divine love which flowed forth to us from the Sacred Heart of our Lord! We can understand the words of the Apostle and make them our own: "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*"

VII

The Prayer of Submission

We cannot rest in simple detachment, for as soon as we have separated ourselves from every known hindrance to our spiritual advance, we perceive an open way of love to the innermost life of conformity to the will of God. We cannot love save as we are in union with that will; it is of the very essence of love that they who love be one in heart and desire and will; and so we try to perfect this in ourselves through the prayer of submission. We seek the sure ground on which we may stand in the confidence of a Divine contentment, and we find it as we follow in the way of interior submission, and respond to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. That response is the prayer of submission.

For the perfection of this prayer, as for every other, there is needed both a right disposition, and also the enabling grace of God. Before assuming that we are ready for this degree of prayer, we should look with great humility to our preparedness. The Holy Spirit will guide us interiorly in the ways of love, so that when we are truly

detached from creatures, and settled in our choice of the Divine will, we may give ourselves in acts of perfect submission. We may make the acts because to the understanding is given some particular illumination, whereby we perceive the glory of the will of God in the eternity of His love; or, we make our acts in blind faith, in heroic self-abandonment. Both of these ways are possible, but for the second we require the more courageous love. If we are faithful to the leading of Divine love, we shall not be left without opportunity for this prayer of submission. God is ever generous to those who seek occasions for love's offering. The Cross was to our Lord Beloved the means to the highest work of love, and we must imitate Him in our own use of the Cross.

1. *The prayer of the faithful soul.*

Submission may be said to be of the essence of perfect love. In true love there is the twofold characteristic of domination and submission. They are mutually powerful and helpful; they are not antagonistic. This is one of the paradoxes of the spiritual life. Love wins by giving and conquers by submission. Hence we meet with very remarkable manifestations of Divine love to the Saints. God allows Himself to be won by the love of the creature, as though He could not deny the loving soul in any of her desires. Thus in the Canticle

the Bridegroom says: "*Thou hast ravished My Heart, My sister, My spouse,*" indicating a degree of love to which He could refuse nothing. The great Saints obtain from God whatever they ask, because of this wonderful love.

But we must look deeply in order to perceive the working of this love. Man has power with God and prevails with Him only when the human love, the human will, is perfectly submissive to the Divine. Now, this is to be not a *partial*, but a whole and complete submission. A partial submission could never be rewarded with more than a partial blessing. How far the truth of this is confirmed in our own experience may very well occasion heart-searchings; certainly it should move us to lowlier acts of love and to more perfect submission. Prevailing love is a wholly submissive love. If we make our prayer of submission, we should endeavour to make it so perfectly as to retain no consciousness of *reserve*. The human *love* will be submitted to the Divine, and the human *will* to the Divine, in such a way as to become one with the Divine love and will. The human love is not overpowered by the Divine, but is united to it. In like manner the human will is not suppressed by the Divine will, but endued with a new and holier energy through the act of submission. When the soul submits herself wholly to God, He works in response to her prayer in very wonderful ways; but it is because

He finds in her no obstacle to His holy purposes. Prayer without submission of the will is but a formal act; it is not the praying of the Saints; it has no resemblance to the prayer of Jesus, and cannot merit His reward.

The prayer of submission is really of the essence of the soul's relationship to the Beloved. If we feel the love of His Sacred Heart, if we are responsive to each sacred impulse of His love, we must feel within ourselves the springing to birth of deep and almost unspeakable desires. We want to be lost to all our self-will, self-love, in that love which is so strong in its essential life that it prevails over every form of human weakness. We try to forsake all that we are of ourselves in order to realize through our own nothingness the pure beauty of Divine love, and the eternal strength of the Divine support.

Again, there grows within us the new consciousness of all that is to be understood of the submission of Jesus to the Father's will. We know it is the taking of every movement of His pure humanity into the working of Eternal Love—making both *one*—so that we are able to perceive the unity of his Sacred Person in the details of thought and feeling. Yea, His submission is so absolute that we can realize nothing apart from the perfection of the Hypostatic Union.

This must guide us in all ways of perfect submission. Our prayer should ever rise to higher

degrees of union, and there is no way of attainment save that of interior conformity to the will of God, *i.e.* there must be perfect submission. But is any prayer so really blessed, or so fruitful in joy, as the prayer of submission? Is anything quite like it? Is anything quite equal to that which He imparts to the soul in response to her submission? May we compare anything to that richness of interior life which He gives wherever there is a true forsaking of the self for love of Him? It may be urged that the prayer of contemplation is a higher thing. Yes, it is so, to speak with theological accuracy. But the prayer of submission rises into contemplation when it is perfect. And according to the testimony of one holy soul, it has an excellence peculiar to itself, and is especially pleasing to God. "The prayer of submission and sacrifice is more pleasing to [Him] than contemplation." These are experiences of love which should be proved in ordinary days as we penetrate to the most interior sense of consciousness of Divine things and realize the joy which is spiritual and unearthly. So shall we meet the days of trial with the courage of proved love.

If in contemplation of the Passion of our Lord we are moved to adoration of His all-conquering love, let us also reflect that even for Him the victory of love on the Cross was the end and not the beginning. He teaches by His life of submission how love rises from victory to victory

until even death is vanquished. We see in Him how love rose to victory as His submission was declared; and we likewise experience the higher movements of love rising to victory as we make and renew our acts of submission. Really, it is by submission that we give place to the omnipotence of God.

Thus the prayer of submission passes into the joy of beholding the work of God, joy in His omnipotence. But we perceive His work as from within, and not as though we were mere spectators; we are identified with Him in every purpose of His love, because we have no desire which does not spring from an infused knowledge of His will. But the prayer of submission is perfected through trial, even as in our Lord whose submission was declared under the agony of His trial in Gethsemane.

2. *The trial.*

Contemplate our Lord in His temptation. See Him as He puts aside every consideration save that of the Father's will. All that can appeal to Him in His Human Nature is presented to Him, only to be set aside, in order to make His act of submission more complete. It is needful to notice His acts at this time in order to see the importance of acts of submission in the details of life, in the lower concerns and interests of the body, if we would be ready for the greatest demands we may

have to meet among the trials of our present life.

Often, it is to be feared, our weakness under some great assault is to be traced to some laxity, or weakness when it was only some small matter of personal indulgence to which we consented. We should try to make all our acts of self-mortification in the spirit of joyfulness and ready submission to the will of God, in order to attain to that perfection of *will* which we shall need in the day of greater trials.

Contemplate our Lord again in Gethsemane. See Him as He makes His first act of submission. How may we understand the agony of it? There was no change in His love to the Father; no wavering in His will; no departure from the holy intention of His life's offering. But at this time all the forces of evil were resisting the might of this love and assailing Him through each avenue of His Human sensibilities: hence the agony and the sweat of Blood.

Can we follow Him through the hours, the wrestling, the thrice-repeated prayer, the Agony? Can we appreciate the awfulness of it as again and again He met the foe, more angry and more malignant after his first and second defeat? But note the prayer: "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*" There was no thought of setting aside the Father's will; but there was a searching of

the possibilities of the Father's will. There was the disentangling of the pure thought and purpose of Divine love from all that the enemy could advance against it. We must not forget how sin leads always to confusion, and how hard it becomes to obtain a clear view of truth and righteousness. This is part of the enemy's plan for the subversion of souls. We may be sure, therefore, that he employed the same means to hinder, if that were possible, the perfect work of Jesus in His Passion. Perhaps we may see, in the coming of the Angel to strengthen Him, how for us He so suffered in order to show the lofty pureness required of the soul who would rise to the most perfect union of will.

Can we see our own struggle in that supreme agony of the Son of Man? Have we made our acts of loving submission? *Yes*, but we are likewise to be prepared for a day of trial. We shall, perhaps, have to meet it when all our natural powers have been weakened as through sickness, or after some long-continued strain; when our sensibilities may be appealed to in a way that will appear right, and yet be wrong, or at least fraught with grave danger. Ah! then we must prove through our own agony that the love of God *is* supreme. Again and again we must face the enemy, and in the determination of love disentangle, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the true from the false, and reassert the love of God, the pure,

holy ideal of love which is still before us, though it be obscured by the efforts of Satan.

We must make our acts of submission to the love for which we are contending. We do not vindicate the love as something apart, but as that which we are to exalt through our own submission. The love is already within us, but for its perfection it demands the freedom of the spirit from every bond of self-love. Hence the pain. But the more complete the submission, the more glorious is the exaltation of love. The height of pure love is measured by the depth of our nothingness, and that we do not realize ever so forcibly as when we make a perfect act of submission.

Think how the Saints have done this. Hear St. Paul calling himself "*the slave of Jesus Christ.*" Was ever submission more complete in any disciple? Was ever the glory of the Divine purpose more nobly attested by any disciple?

Ah! then, we see what we have to do; and love can do it. Realize the love, act in its power, be patient in its certainty and the prayer will be strong: "*Not my will, but Thine, be done.*"

3. *After the trial.*

We notice now the effect within the soul of those acts of submission and the victories which followed. There seems to be a real work for God, for which the soul is prepared by submission and victory. Thus we think of our Lord. The Cross followed

upon the trial in Gethsemane. We may say with all reverence that through the long hours which followed He was completing His sacrifice in yet more interior ways. We may think of Him in union of will with the Father, giving effect to every thought within the Divine purpose. We may even contemplate Him acting above the visible and apparent details of the Passion in the unspeakable ways of love, dealing with sin, in the hidden mystery of Atonement.

The contemplation of this must suggest to us very much to guide us in the more hidden ways of our own spiritual life. When we have made our acts of loving submission and have realized the union of our will with the Divine Will, we perceive that we are still far from the end—the spiritual sacrifice is not yet complete. What is it to be one with God in will? Is it not to share His holy purpose of love? Is it not to be even identified with Him in His intention towards men, and His desire for their sanctification?

There comes to us yet deeper questionings: "*What wilt Thou have me to do?*" There will be presented clearer visions of the ideal, not elusive and vain. We shall desire that holier inward pureness to which alone the vision will remain open. Sometimes in the contemplation of the necessity for perseverance we shall be so led on as to think that we can never again be moved by anything else.

But let us take care. It is not in contemplation of this interior work, but in the loving accomplishment of it, that we are to glorify our Lord and be made like Him in His Passion. There is suffering yet, just because there is still the need of submission in the secret ways of the spiritual life. The higher we are led in spiritual ways the more absolute does submission become, and also the more voluntary—that is, the loving soul anticipates the leading of the Divine will. This is difficult to express; but we may say that the Holy Spirit of Love so controls the human will as to guide us towards the higher acts of spiritual sacrifice, even before the occasion arises. Such loving submission comes to be the natural expression of love which in growing pureness is rising to really sublime acts. We may even say that very sublime acts are not possible where there is not true submission. The higher acts of sacrifice and of heroic love demand that perfect loss of the *self* which true submission implies.

Of course, thus to love is to be brought to most interior knowledge of the Passion, the knowledge which is not possible before our submission is rewarded with the grace to persevere in the path of hidden conformity to the Beloved.

But may we not well seek to know the higher ways of submission, just because we love, and love urges us on? Indeed, we shall not be true to ourselves if, perceiving the high pathway of pure

love, we do not venture the ascent. We are capable of great things while we are true to the instincts of love; and love will ever incline to its Centre, which is God.

Let no one refuse the offering which love demands. Many refuse to their own irreparable loss. To such refusal may be traced very much that is poor, and ineffectual, and even unloving, in lives which might have been unearthly in their beauty and rich in the manifoldness of Divine grace; while the radiance of Divine light will illumine the life which love has ennobled through perfect submission. We find ourselves in life and joy when we are lost to ourselves in God.

VIII

Reparation

In the Passion of our Lord love and pain are blended indistinguishably. As we prove the possibilities of love in the spiritual life, we learn how love can pass into pain, and pain become the proof of love. We understand how love cannot be without pain if we are to become like our Lord, and really share His Cross. To share His Cross, to be made partakers of His suffering, means for the loving soul a great deal more than an effort to bear the everyday trials of life with patience. Love urges us forward in the way of the Cross to something more than this. It is no great proof of love when we only try to bear with patience what we cannot avoid or avert; love is proved by the way in which we share, in desire and will, the Cross of the Beloved.

We love Him, and therefore we seek to identify ourselves with Him. We sorrow with Him, or we rejoice with Him, as the many operations of His love are separately understood. We feel how the conditions of our earthly life bring us into

sympathetic relation to Him in the sorrows of His earthly sojourn. We make response in various ways; but there is one way, that of reparation, which we will consider in this chapter. The offering of reparation as an act of love needs to be studied with care, and its rightful place be given to it in the service of our life.

It may be to some an unfamiliar development of devotion, and for that reason it should be considered carefully, and with due regard to the fact that there cannot be uniformity of spiritual perception. Some may disapprove of the word *reparation*, feeling how unworthy is any one to make any such offering to God. But they who accept and use the word are very far from assuming that they have anything to offer to their Lord that is not the fruit of love, and therefore of humility. There is no act of devotion that can either profit ourselves, or give glory to God, that is not made in humility; and this is never so true as of special acts to which we feel that our love for God inclines us.

1. *The revelation of the place of reparation in the working of love.*

Our wonder increases as we are led by the Holy Spirit into the secret ways and mysteries of the spiritual life. We are amazed at the love which attracts us. We are moved and inspired by that glowing love which not only reveals the

hidden Divine working, but also leads us to a direct share in it. If we have understood the far-reaching effects of perfect submission to the will and love of God, and have at all realized them as the results of our own act of loving submission, we shall be prepared for yet deeper thoughts. At every step, as we advance in love and devotion, we are arrested by some new thought, profound and beautiful, which, while it reveals to us more of the Divine wisdom, also awakens in us a sense of power and of capacity, and suggests to us more perfect ways of loving service.

We are aware of a certain inner illumination which has followed upon the effort of love to offer itself worthily. We perceive the higher paths of love; and yet we cannot follow them far, for they seem to our gaze to be lost in the white light of eternal pureness. We must wait with the patience of holy obedience until our eyes can bear the radiance of the revelation. There is always a certain confusion until we have grown accustomed to the light. It is at this point that we need to act with the carefulness of loving reverence. We may even find it necessary to renew our acts of self-surrender and submission before we can fairly apprehend the meaning of love's next demand. Great is the mystery of love before us; but our own acts of love must be quite simple and unquestioning. Let there be no thought of possible

greatness in ourselves; no complacent thoughts of the sublimity of our love, if we would respond to the call of the Beloved.

When submission is perfect, the soul is lost to itself in the realization of the love of God, and particularly of that love as it is revealed through the Passion of Jesus. There is an understanding of the Divine justice, and of the love which vindicated it. We contemplate that holy justice of God, so wondrous that in majesty of wrath it consumes all that is unholy; and yet, in a moment, is changed into mercy, because it cannot crush the faintest movement of love in any creature: "*A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.*"

In contemplation of that holy justice and mercy of God, we see the place which Jesus took in His Passion. He vindicated the eternal holiness and justice, while He made the all-prevailing appeal to Divine mercy. If we look to the suffering of our Lord at that time, it is unspeakably awful. If we think of the suffering of love in the Sacred Heart, no words can be found capable of expressing it. And yet it was love which suffered in order to conquer; in order to declare its eternal power. It is well, when contemplating the separate pains of the Passion, to seek to realize in each the distinctive expression of love. Only in this way can we apprehend in any degree the fulness of its awful meaning.

And so we pass from the visible torments of the Cross, to ask what was *Love doing?*

Ah! can we realize at all what is the love of the Incarnate Lord? Can we at all realize it in its Human perfection, so wonderful that His Soul is as the mirror of God? Can we contemplate the ineffable embrace of the two Natures in Him; or, can we approach in thought to the ecstasy of the Hypostatic Union? And yet all this must enter into our conception of all that was wrought by love in the Passion.

Consider how our Incarnate Lord, Son of man and Son of God, sorrowed for the offence of sin against the love of the Father. He alone could know the extent of this, and we must take account of that knowledge as it appealed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in His love for the Father. What burning desire there was for the Father's glory! what yearning for the satisfaction of the Father's Heart! How vehement the passion for the work of reparation! We may even, with all reverence, dare to say that the longing to make reparation consumed Him: *"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?"*

We think of the necessity for Atonement; of that awful condition of perfect atonement, the innocence of the Victim; and if we were merely concerned with the primary doctrine, we should have to discuss its conditions more fully, but now

we think of that peculiar generosity of love which we call "reparation."

Jesus exhibits it in His Passion, and so reveals to us the place of reparation in the working of true love.

As love grows and deepens; as through love we attain to the higher ways of Divine thought, and perceive the infinite tenderness of Divine love, we are enabled to understand more simply the meeting of love with love in the Passion. Jesus presents His pure Human love to the Father in the agony of His sorrow because of all that man had done against the love of the Father: "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*" Beneath that prayer we perceive the working of love in reparation.

2. *The call to reparation.*

When we understand this revelation of love in the Passion, we are prepared to recognize its working in every true spiritual life. That which is effectual in our Lord is no less to be sought in His Mystical Body, the Church; and then it must be sought also in the individual members of that Body; and in ourselves no less than in others. There is no doubt that the love which in the Beloved found peculiar expression in the offering of reparation, will be found similarly active in the Church and in individuals. This, indeed, is the case. Certain great souls, moved

by irresistible love, seem to have responded to what, to them, was nothing less than a call to the service of reparation. This appears to be the vocation of some who have been described as "seraphic souls" because of their interior love. It would be easy to enumerate the Saints who have been pre-eminent in this love. They have felt that their interior sufferings which proceeded from love enabled them to make true offerings of reparation to the Heart of their Lord. Some, indeed, seem to have understood their sufferings to be directly ordained to that end; and the more they advanced in love, the more clearly they understood the sweet demand of the Divine love.

But it is not to the great Saints alone that we look for the facts relating to the interior teaching of love. I desire to speak with all reverence and caution, but certainly it is becoming more and more evident that this peculiar service of love is being understood and rendered by souls to-day. I am convinced that, speaking broadly, souls are being led into ways of love, and also of suffering, wherein the call to reparation is so plain as to constitute a direct vocation. Sometimes it is emphasized in particular circumstances; sometimes it is of a more general character; at one time for a single soul, at another for many, and so on.

In every case the compelling force is love; not simply for the person or persons who are offending, *but solely for the sake of the Beloved, whose*

Sacred Heart has been grieved. Sometimes the loving soul is encouraged to offer yet greater love, to suffer yet more deeply, by being drawn, in the intimacy of love, into a certain participation in the sorrows of the Sacred Heart, to feel for one brief moment the touch of unspeakable pain. At another time, it is rather by the strong insistence in the Divine love that the soul is led from act to act. At yet other times, the soul is arrested and held to the certainty of some special need. But in every case it is a call of love to love. Only love can receive it; only love can obey it.

More wonderful still is the fact that certain souls have been called and divinely prepared for this particular service of love. They are hidden, mortified souls. They are content to be known only by Him to whom they are entirely devoted. Outwardly they are simple and loving, winning others by their unconscious goodness. Inwardly they realize the need of great pureness, both of soul and body, while a clear perception of Divine Holiness controls their intention in all things. They are supernaturally sensitive in spirit; they detect the presence of sin, sometimes even the secrets of other souls; and they suffer, because to them is so evident the mind of God towards sin. Thus in knowledge and interior pain they fulfil their high, but mysterious vocation.

We may say truly that to these is given, as to none other, to know the sorrows of Jesus, the

secret pain of the Cross. Not to all, perhaps, not to many, is it thus given; but if we are ever led into that mystic way of pain, let us be reverent and lowly in our response to a call so high. At the same time, let us always be careful and watchful of the secret impulses of Divine love. It were a spiritual loss, great indeed, to fail at the moment when love is given some opportunity for purest service. We cannot well define the loss to any soul, because we cannot know here the effect for good of a perfect act of reparation. But certainly to fail of love's best offering must result in loss which probably will be known only in that Day when the Beloved Himself will reward the soul for her secret offering.

3. *Acts of reparation.*

We need the purest love in order to make these acts rightly. We should not presume to offer them save as the expressions of deep love. There will be occasions when we cannot make such acts; again, there will be times of more perfect devotion when they alone will properly express what we feel and desire for the sake of our Lord; when in no other way can we satisfy that inmost requirement of love which we understand through growing knowledge of the deep meaning of the Passion.

Acts of reparation may be regarded as steps in the way towards heroic charity, and therefore

we need to be on our guard against the subtleties of self-love. Let no one make an act of reparation to our Lord thinking thereby to increase his own merit, still less with any presumptuous thought of personal goodness; for no one can obey such promptings of the Spirit of God without heart-searching. The essential note of all such acts is the pureness of our love, the absence of all self-love. We desire *all* for the Lord whom we love, seeking nothing for ourselves. Indeed, the only reward which a faithful soul could welcome would be such an increase of love as would enable her to offer more to Him. And that reward is given.

Acts of reparation are to be made for the love of God and our neighbour. Thus we may offer a work of mercy as an act of reparation; or an act of contrition may seem at some time the most fitting act of reparation; or we may offer the pain which we feel through sympathy with the Redeemer; or, yet again, the love which we feel to be growing into actual pain in the intensity of our desire after God; or we may offer prayers and devotions on behalf of others.

The loving soul will not be at a loss to vary her acts so as to give full expression to her love. It is well, in giving ourselves to such loving devotion, to seek first of all to be lost in contemplation of our Lord's infinite merit; to feel within ourselves how little we have offered in satisfaction of that love; how little the world is

offering; how we cannot desire less than the most perfect offering of love from all souls for the honour of the Beloved; that *our love* for Him compels us to desire *all* for Him; that because we love, we must do all that in us lies to express that longing, to give all in satisfaction to Him. This love will become a very real and conscious movement through which we shall be drawn to a better and holier understanding of His desire towards souls. We shall be taught according to the love within us how to offer worthy acts of reparation.

All acts, in their proper degree, will be understood as we seek to enter into the ways of love in the Sacred Passion of Jesus, and aspire for very love to conformity to His Spirit.

Some books of devotion contain helps and suggestions for acts of reparation; they should be adopted with great care and reserve, because without carefulness we may lose the spirit of love which alone can make them worthy of being offered to the Beloved. But such thoughts as these will in no way daunt the soul which is being led into the ways of heroic love; the purity of her aspiration will in a measure protect her; while her humility will deepen the reverent love with which she will offer all for the satisfaction of her Lord.

IX

Love

The spiritual life of the Christian is distinctively a life of love; and because of love, it is a life of attainment in the high knowing and understanding of God. We have noticed already how love controls the thoughts and inspires the devotion of the Christian; now we are to think of love growing up to purity and heroism because of this high knowing and understanding of God. There must be no limit to the effort and aspiration of love, because He Whom we love is Eternal God. We love Him Who is infinite, and in the realization of His infinity we are moved to ever nobler deeds of love in our desire to glorify Him.

When we have grasped the truth that love is the beginning and the end of all spiritual attainment, there springs up within the soul a great gladness because of the very simplicity of that which God asks of us. It is so easy to love, it is so inspiring to behold the far distances of the way of love bathed in the light of the glory of God. "*God is love*," and in loving we realize our infinite life in Him. To love is to be with Him; to grow

in love is to prove the joy of union with God. "*He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*"

It is within the joy of His love that we find the secret of that courage which sustains us in the way of the Cross. Love impels us to seek the knowledge of God's working through the mysteries of suffering and sacrifice, and learning more of the wisdom of God through the Passion of Jesus, we understand that the Cross is the symbol of power and of love. The vision of the Cross inspires us, through it we learn so much of God and His love that we are moved to higher acts of love in the most secret ways of the spirit. The fruit of the Passion in the spiritual life is love deep and strong rising to the heroism of the Saints. We learn the whole truth of this at the Cross of Jesus.

1. *What we learn from the Cross.*

When we estimate the character of a Saint we are not content with the early evidences of the Divine love in him; we take due account of his early days, but we concern ourselves most of all with that which is evident as the fruit of his sufferings and his labours; we regard the fine gold, though we do not forget the fire in which it has been tried. The Saint is not merely one who loves, but one who loves heroically.

Now we shall deal with the fact of love and its place in the spiritual life; and our thoughts as we

contemplate the crucifix must be rather of the heroic than of the ordinary aspects of love. We cannot arrive at a true understanding of the possibilities of love in ourselves unless we are willing to see them in the hard ways of the Cross. If we have understood the leading of Divine love through ways of self-surrender, mortification, detachment, submission, and reparation, we can no longer be satisfied with that which does not approximate to the pure and holy ideal to which our hearts have been attracted. We have proved that love attains to its true greatness through our efforts in the way of self-mortification; that there is a region of activity, far above our natural selfishness, where love is supreme and where it is the very medium of pure communion between us and God. We can perceive that as love becomes strong and heroic our whole spiritual outlook changes; we look no longer to temporal interests, but upon Divine ideals. Yea, we even realize that those ideals are nothing less than eternal realities. We go even further, and understand the necessity of the Cross. The understanding of love is higher than mere reason: it is supernatural; and therefore it is concerned with Divine and eternal things. Not even the Passion itself could obscure the way of love, even though our Lord could cry, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"

And so it is that as life develops ever towards its completeness in union with God, we find that love

is tested to the uttermost, and we *must* make efforts which in character become more and more heroic. Of course, we shall not be judges of our own heroism. Our duty is simply, and in self-forgetfulness, to do in every instance the best and highest as love enables us, and leave the development in the hands of God. Heroic love is attained only through humility in the daily exercise of charity, as we follow our Lord in the way of the Cross; for in so doing we shall never think that we have satisfied the demand of love. They who love best will never think that they do so. They understand the work of love to which they are called and its greatness humbles them.

The greatness of the demand which is made upon love is often almost overwhelming. Our weak human nature shrinks from the pain of hard discipline, stern self-repression, or prolonged conflict. But the longer the trial, the weaker its power if, moment by moment, the *will* declares for God. So it was in the Passion of Jesus. We turn to the crucifix, and behold in the Beloved the steady triumph of love rising from moment to moment with the assertion of His will. See Him, as the world judges, at the mercy of the noisy rabble about the Cross; all the horrors of His suffering were intensified by the malice which swayed the host around Him. And yet He submitted; yea, more, He asserted His will, His love through it; for though they knew it not, the power was

with Him and not with them. "All the power of all His murderers is His own and in His own hand. Very slowly He is passing through the anguish which kills by inches. Voluntarily, from moment to moment, He is choosing the pain; voluntarily He is being crushed under the deadly pressure of the effort of evil against Him. Only try to imagine the unimaginable pressure of this last concentrated temptation upon His human will. For none apart from Himself can put one pang upon Him. One moment's unwillingness to suffer —and He can be wholly free! Every separate item in the anguish is allowed by Himself. One moment's reluctance on His part, one moment's impulse to draw back, even one moment's hesitation of will, might instantly have ended it all. But that moment never came."[1]

Here, then, we have the true test of our own acts of will; we have, it may be, also the revelation of our own failures and their causes. As we think of our own love and of our failure to rise to really noble deeds by its power, how do we understand and judge our own acts? Why did we fail under temptation after resisting even for a long time? Why were we not equal to that courageous act? Why did we fail under suffering? Why were we so discouraged in sorrow? Why have we never attempted, or, at most, half-heartedly, any great thing in the spiritual life? Why have we been

[1] Moberley, "Atonement and Personality," p. 115.

reluctant in works of charity? The will was weak. Yes. But also, we must say, we lacked the grace of fortitude, and allowed our love to continue in its imperfect degree. We were too *self*-loving. We had *not* learned the secret of the Cross. But though we perceive in this present time so much of the truth of love as to judge of our past failures, we are not to waste our strength in regrets which may spring only from self-love; rather are we to accept the higher revelation and pursue our course with holier courage, if with greater humility. Our strength lies not in looking back, but in brave effort to go forward. Love grows strongest where the trial is hardest.

2. *Pure love.*

As we contemplate the revelation of pure love in the Passion, we are arrested by the correlative fact of pure suffering. The two are one; and we may thank our Divine Lord for all that He reveals. We are attracted by the pure radiance of His love; the vision of its Divine clearness and of its essential glory deepens as we gaze into it; as our hearts kindle with holy desires, not only to behold it and admire it for ever, but most of all to be able to enter into it and abide within it; for that we understand to be the portion of the Saints. But there is also the other fact, the pure suffering of the Beloved. Ah, where *we* fail is just at that point where the suffering begins. Is it too much to say

that the very entrance to the state of pure love is set in suffering? But this suffering is not accidental, it is voluntary suffering, for the movements of love are under the control of the will. Beholding the high glory of love we also understand its demands. We feel the constraint of love. We may aspire to that sublime height of pure activity and surrender ourselves wholly to the Divine love; or through fear, and weakness of faith, we many turn away. This is our opportunity, and not for an instant should we hesitate; but looking beyond the pain seek only to glorify our Lord in pure love. Like Him we shall suffer in proportion to the purity of our love, and we shall suffer willingly.

But more, we shall endeavour to hide this interior suffering beneath the simple cheerfulness of holy charity. Our love is not pure, nor is the suffering blessed, if we make no effort to rise above the selfishness of mere heaviness. Our judgment is with Him Who seeth in secret,[1] and to Him we should commit ourselves.[2]

At this point we need most especially the assistance of the Holy Spirit; for voluntary suffering, while it may make glorious the soul which already loves, may also be but the self-assertion of a false asceticism. Voluntary suffering must be the soul's response to the impulses of Divine love. To those whom God wills to lead to the highest

[1] St. Matt. vi. 6. [2] St. Peter ii. 23.

union with Himself, He gives more abundant opportunities for the exercise of heroic love. We need to mark these in our own experience, because upon our courage and readiness of love depends the progress of after-days. Some there are who attain to a state of comparative freedom, in which they meet with few trials, and "pass the remainder of their lives with but little variety, and without any particular struggles or severe ordeals. Others, however, undergo a more rigorous process of purification, and progress farther in love, and this either because God's designs upon them are higher, or because they ask it more insistently, or show themselves more prompt to die unto themselves in all things, by a more unbroken state of recollectedness and a more generous self-sacrifice. "When God," says St. John of the Cross, "does not find sufficient strength in a soul, He does not follow up His work of purification.'"[1]

Thus we see there is need of holy directness of will; a generous self-renunciation; a deliberate choice of the highest; a determination which keeps the soul steadfast and true in love. But in all this we suffer because the will, being held in oneness with the will of God, is ever refusing compliance with the demands of the lower nature.

Thus we behold our Lord asserting through His holy will from moment to moment the determination of love. As we contemplate Him in His

[1] "The Degrees of the Spiritual Life," vol. ii. pp. 151 182.

Passion, rising, as it were, higher and higher through the compelling force of love, we are carried beyond the hard facts of the Cross, to adore the pureness of His love glowing in its own intensity.

This is what we learn from the Cross. If we will bring it into our own lives, and correspond to this work of our Lord by interior effort in the ways of love, we shall find indeed the pain, and that, very likely, as the first experience. We may even find the pain greater because of unexpected spiritual assaults which, through their very subtlety and strength, seem almost to dethrone the will. But we know that, so long as the will declares for God and love, we are not lost: rather we are being purified. It is in this suffering of the will that we may be led to that which has been called "the martyrdom of love." This is granted to those generous ones who, without looking back, are faithful to their love. And so, as a Saint has said, "Give your will to God, and you will feel it." Yes, but beyond this pain which is more and more pure as the will is fixed upon the highest good, according to the will of God, there glows the light of pure love. It glows with Divine light, while its glory is deeper than our most fervent desires can penetrate; it catches a glow from the Cross of Jesus; and yet it is not wholly beyond us; something of its wondrous clearness is passing into our own souls, for every victory of grace, every triumph of the will

through interior pain, is a forward step by which we advance towards purity of love.

We know something of this. We know that even mortified souls feel the pain, and are all too easily tempted to accept less for eternity, if only they may be less troubled here. Let us be watchful against any inclination to self-satisfaction. Love cannot become quite pure while we are unwilling to wage war upon our spiritual enemies. "*I will follow upon mine enemies, and overtake them: neither will I turn again till I have destroyed them.*" This is ever the determination of heroic souls.

One consideration must be added at this point. We cannot determine for ourselves whether our state or our acts are those of pure love. The noise and heat of battle may to some extent obscure the heroism of the warrior; but at the same time he may be fighting superhumanly. So it is with interior conflicts of the soul. In the stress the hard-pressed soul makes acts of love and surrender of will in an agony of anxiety, lest there should be a momentary consent to sin; and afterwards, like St. Rose of Lima, cries out in an anguish of contrition, fearing the stain of guilt. But as with that Saint, so with every valiant soul, the pureness of love is regarded by the Lord of all —yes, and it is even the purer for the soul's self-mistrust. Let us therefore aim at the highest continually with perfect oblation of the will, and we

shall have the joy of pure love. That is, we shall have this joy increasingly. We shall not have it finally and in perfection here; because, so long as we are in this world, there will always remain with us the fear of loss. But for those "*who overcome*"—those "*who are faithful unto death*" —there waits the joy which is the fulness of that which here they experience in an advancing degree.

3. *Victorious love.*

Perhaps it may seem that little more can be said of love when it has reached the degree indicated by pure acts. But those acts have yet to be increased so as to form a spiritual habit—a state of soul. This is the victorious love of the Saints. Looking into the Passion of our Lord, we see how love triumphed until there was no further victory to be gained. Love endured all the outward torment, all the inward agony, all that mysterious anguish of expression which led to the cry, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" Love had endured until it stood alone in its agony. May we dare to contemplate it?

O Lord, Beloved, hold us in mercy from all irreverent intrusion, while for the encouragement of our own hearts we look into the shadows of Thine agony!

Think:—there was a moment of deepest darkness when the will of the Beloved rose through

the agony of love in the last movement which finally and for ever, hurled back the enemy. It was the moment for the closing in upon His Human soul of the hatefulness of sin, and the bitter malice of the enemy; and from the utter loneliness of that instant the cry arose that rent the very Heavens: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*"

We can see now what victorious love must mean to us. We know how hard it is to *will* with steadfastness when the stress of temptation seems to blind us; when we doubt ourselves in fear that our will has been overcome. We know something of this pain. We may even have experienced that touch of pure suffering which is not withheld from those whom our Lord destines for strictest conformity to Himself. But whether in little or in much, we have proved and experienced enough to teach us that love is victorious only as it endures to the final overthrow of all that is against us.

How dark is the suffering side of the soul's life! Yes; because there must be the Passion in the spiritual life. But is there not the brighter side too? Truly. Because we have our passion we have also a joy set before us. That joy enters into the pain, and glorifies it. Our Divine Redeemer, "*for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" There was something of that joy passing into His soul as love pressed

on, winning from moment to moment the victory. So with us, there is the joy which is to encourage us at every step. Our pain is not without relief, and we should never lose hope, however long the darkness may envelop us. Rather, through all, let the soul cling in love to the certainty which God gives, and lovingly anticipate the joy of victory. We need to live in the certainty of our victory. Yes, and even to recognize that the pains of our conflict, as they prove our love, are shaping the crown which God has laid up for us because we love Him. If, indeed, we accept this as the truth revealed to holy, suffering souls, we shall be less impatient of the way of the Cross, less eager to pass beyond the suffering, because we desire the most abundant fruit to be laid up for the Beloved.

How patient our Lord was in the way of the Cross! His victory with its fruit of love was won slowly, step by step, in His desire to perfect His work of love in each detail. We may think of Him in the intensity of His love, aspiring in purest self-determination until the highest glory had been won, even through uttermost pain, and all this in secret consciousness until He could say, "*It is finished.*"

We have our own passion to endure. Let us, like Him, be true to the secret understanding and demand of love, which will always be sufficiently clear for us to follow, our one thought and purpose

being to attain to the highest that is possible to us in love, that we may have the more to lay at the feet of our Lord. Pure love directs us to the end where like Him we may say in holy contentment, "*It is finished.*"

X

Conformity

Loving contemplation of the Passion of Jesus inspires with the longing to be like Him. The beauty of the Divine love in Him attracts us more and more; we draw nearer to it in devotion and aspiration. But as we draw near with reverent gaze, we perceive that, in order to rejoice in that beauty and to possess it, we must be changed into His image; that our power to stand within its glory consists in our inward likeness to Him. We are forced to recognize both our unlikeness to Him and also the only way by which we can hope to become like Him. The way is marked for us as the way of the Cross. There is no life for the Christian outside that way; and if we think that for ourselves it is not very clearly defined, we have but to study the Cross of Jesus and test our lives by its teaching, and we shall quickly perceive its course. If we follow in that way it will become to us not a way of unrelieved pain, but rather a way of gladness, because it leads to the triumph of love for us in conformity to the likeness of Jesus. But if it is to be so to us, we must embrace the Cross; that is,

the life of love which, set before us, is to be perfected through the Cross. There is no other way of perfect conformity to His likeness.

1. *Conformity to the Passion of Jesus.*

When we contemplate our Lord dying as the Victim of love, we are naturally moved to a great admiration, and we admire in proportion to our sympathy with the impulses and aspirations of His Sacred Heart. Our sympathy grows strong as we read the meaning of our own deep experiences of pain and sorrow in the significance of the accumulated woes of the Passion. Such devout and loving contemplation affects the spring of thought and action. We attend more patiently and reverently to the sacred teaching of the Cross; we are more reconciled to any state of suffering into which we may be led; we may even be glad of it because of all that God is revealing to us through our suffering. All this is good, and to be desired; but is there not something higher? Is this that we have so lightly sketched the whole of the truth about conformity to our Lord? Let us put it quite shortly: *Something more is needed for the making of the Saint.* This must be considered; and first of all a few remarks may be offered by way of stating the need.

A great French preacher used to pray: "Lord, Lord, give us Saints"; and at no time has the prayer been more necessary than at the present.

We know that God *is* making Saints; but do we not leave that very fact too much unheeded? It is indeed the work of the Holy Ghost to sanctify a soul; but also we are "*fellow workers with God.*" We are therefore, as individuals, concerned in this Divine work. God makes Saints of those whose desire for love and holiness rises to perfect conformity to His own eternal purpose towards them. "*Called to be Saints,*" we are to fulfil our vocation. The Church is the school wherein Saints are trained; but such is the state of the world, and of the Church influenced by the world, that great holiness is not common. "*The Lord knoweth them that are His,*" and doubtless there are hidden Saints whose glory will never be proclaimed in this world; but might there not be more? God has restored the Religious life of England as a part of recovered Catholic life; and every community should be a school of sanctity. If of all Christians it is said that they are "*called to be Saints,*" how much more true ought it not to be of every one who by special vocation and by profession is set apart for the highest spiritual attainment! How unseemly in them is anything which hinders—I will not say *goodness*—but *sanctity!* Everything is a hindrance which restrains the soul from the aspirations and deeds of heroic love. But how difficult it is for us to perceive the truth of this at all times! Self-deception is never so easy as when we begin to make exceptions in our own

favour; or treat the precepts of our Lord and the Saints as though they were not written for *our* guidance in the way of conformity to Him. Careful study of the Passion, both in its accidents and in its spirit, will lead to the way of that Divine wisdom which guided the Saints. Conformity is not attained through admiration alone; nor even through the sympathy which moves us to loving devotion. It is the work of love. Jesus died the Victim of love. Sanctity demands for its perfection that heroic movement of love whereby the soul perseveres through pain and sacrifice and attains to a degree of love which reveals in every action the pure likeness of Jesus crucified.

We need to be generous in love, not counting the cost. We do not know the strength of love within us before it has been tested by the Cross; and pure love is unconquerable. Behold, then, the wonder of our suffering. The Cross, the terrors of which threaten us with defeat, serves but to purify the love of the faithful soul; and love as it is purified triumphs over the Cross. Indeed, so real may this become, we may almost persuade ourselves we have no Cross; for the pain of the Cross is lost in the joy of oneness with our Lord. Let us but will as He wills if we would attain to this joy in Him.

To be conformed to the Passion of Jesus is the work of love. This work is put before each one of us, but to each is given the Cross. "The Cross,

therefore, is always ready, and everywhere waiteth for thee. Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for whithersoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and ever shalt find thyself. Turn thee above, turn thee below, turn thee without, turn thee within, and in all these places thou shalt find the Cross; and everywhere of necessity thou must hold fast patience, if thou wilt have inward peace, and win an everlasting crown."[1] And how great a good it is to us! The voice of experience will always declare that "the Cross is good at all times and all places. It matters little of what wood it is made; enough for us that it is a Cross, and presented to us" by our Lord Who entrusts it to our love. We appraise the Cross according to our understanding of its benefits. This may suggest to us some searching questions when we reflect upon the poverty of our knowledge of the highest proof of love in our Lord. To know the Cross without understanding it is the worst possible reproach in one whose profession is that of intimate love.

The Cross is to make us like our Lord in His suffering, not in outward conformity merely, but in the inwardness of love's purest offering. We need to look continually to that highest work whereby we give ourselves to our Lord; the suffering, the wounds which we sustain in our conflict, are incidental to the life we live. But we

[1] "De Imitatione Christi," lib. ii. 12.

must not stay to regard them in self-pity; they should be regarded only as they serve to stimulate love and strengthen the will. Contemplate the Beloved in His Passion; mark the accumulation of sufferings, the multiplicity of wounds; try to understand the effect upon His soul. Surely at every fresh pain His love rose higher, penetrating the very heavens in its pureness; while His will was opposed with ever holier power to the forces against Him. This is our way of true conformity to the Passion. Love must grow in pureness through every pain, while the will with holiest power must subdue every lower influence in order that the purpose of Divine love may be realized to the eternal glory of the Beloved.

Lord, must I bear the whole of it, or none?
"Even as I was crucified, My son."

Will it suffice if I the thorn-crown wear?
"To take the scourge My shoulders were made bare."

My hands, O Lord, must I be pierced in both?
"Twain gave I to the hammer, nothing loth."

But sure, O Lord, my feet need not be nailed?
"Had Mine not been, then love had not prevailed."

What need I more, O Lord, to fill my part?
"Only the spear-point in thy broken heart."[1]

2. *Conformity to the likeness of Jesus.*

This follows naturally from what we have already considered. The likeness of Jesus is to

[1] F. G. Scott, in "The Living Church."

be impressed upon the faithful soul. That is very clearly taught by St. Paul: "*If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.*"

This likeness is to be complete; but it is not to be sought in the life of glory apart from the life of suffering. The soul must endure her Passion before she can anticipate her resurrection. Conformity to the Passion of Jesus looks first to that likeness which St. Paul described in himself: "*I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*" The Apostle may have received the sacred stigmata, like St. Francis and others. There is nothing improbable in that; but, however we understand it of him, we are confronted by the certain testimony of the Saints that favoured souls, loving souls, who have most truly entered into the depth and meaning of the Passion and have shared in various ways the sufferings of their Lord, have received those sacred tokens. It is surely unwise to turn away from the evidence of history; for in so doing we miss the inner teaching of the Cross, and lose the guidance which we might have in understanding the Passion of the soul.

This high honour does but mark the greater fact of the soul's love. We are, therefore, to look for the soul's true likeness to the Beloved, not in the favours which He has bestowed upon her, but in the love which has made her capable of receiving them. The radiance of the Sacred Wounds in our

Lord proceeds from the burning love of His Heart. The glory of any gift or favour in the Saint is in proportion to the love which inflames him. We cannot doubt that the Saints and Martyrs will have many a mark of glorified suffering which they will retain for ever, not as evidences of pain once endured, but as proofs of triumphant love. We may even dare to say that these will be always precious, not to themselves only, but pre-eminently to our Lord, since they are proofs of His love made perfect in His Own.

How wonderful it will all be! How eager we should be in love now, if we did but remember the end of the work which our Lord is directing in us! When we fail both in practice and understanding of love, it is in this: we do not seek often enough to rise beyond the noise and confusion of our Calvary. We suffer and lose ourselves in our suffering. If we are ever to rise in love so that our way of suffering may be rightly described as *our Passion*, we *must* look to eternal issues and not to any present results. Sometimes, we know, the final sufferings of Saints and Martyrs have been spoken of as their "Passion," and we feel that term to be rightly employed, because we understand how they loved. May we also love as they did!

There is the promise, the hope which has possessed the minds of Saints in all ages: "*When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with*

it." Or St. John: "*We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*" If we had no other words, how truly they would express the instinct of every loving soul; but there is another word: "*He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.*"

Let the faithful soul reflect. He, my Lord, my Beloved, waits that He may be satisfied in *me!* Can He be satisfied with love that fails to reach the greatness which is possible? Can He be satisfied with the soul in which His likeness is not quite perfect? Why is the love, why is the likeness, not perfect? The answer lies deep within our hearts in that weakness of will, that want of courage, that poorness of spirit, which will not dare or venture anything for love.

If we perceive the truth concerning our own failures in the past, we understand it also as the very call of God to prove ourselves by more faithful efforts in days to come. We do not realize our failure save in contrast with possible success, nor our poor attainment save in contrast with some beautiful ideal. At the Cross of Jesus we learn the truth, but in such wise that love in all its inspiring glory illuminates our pathway, and we know to what we may attain if we are brave in our response.

O Lord, Beloved, while we have time, may we rise up to the greatness of Thy call of love!

3. *Communion of the Cross.*

There is a very special experience of love known to those whom our Lord is leading by the way of the Cross to perfect conformity to Himself, which we may call the communion of the Cross. It springs out of the personal love which exists between the soul and the Beloved. That love lays the concerns of the soul upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and likewise lays the burden of His Heart upon the human soul, so far as it is in love prepared and enabled to bear it. Thus that which gives glory to the Beloved is a joy to the soul; while that which is grievous to Him afflicts the loving soul likewise, and calls forth acts of tender devotion. There is a deep realization of wrong, and of everything which outrages eternal love, and an overflowing sorrow on behalf of the One loved. In truest communion of suffering the faithful soul unites with Him not only in the suffering or the sorrow, but in will with Him in His holy charity towards any who have occasioned the distress.

When St. Paul realized his own participation in the sufferings of his Lord, and when successive Saints have offered their love and their tears, it was with a knowledge of sin and of wrongdoing which they learned in that interior experience of love, the communion of the Cross. And yet, it is no mere display of feeling. Tears shed for Christ are never idle, never valueless. There are human tears too sacred to be witnessed, so wonderful may

be the love of soul for soul; but when it is the love of a soul for the Beloved—Jesus—and the tears are those which are shed for Him in the communion of the Cross, they are holy, they are like His Own tears, love's priceless tokens. They are blessed and efficacious, because in that hour of intimate communion He takes them into His Own Heart's possession that they may not be lost. No one may tell how really such offerings avail for the good of souls and of the Church at large; perhaps they are among the hidden treasures of Heaven which are kept against the Day of God, the day of the ingathering of the Saints.

This experience of love should not be unknown to any really loving soul. That it is not better known is because we do not seek as we might to know the Heart of our Lord. When we pray for the sinner, for the Church, or for the world, do we think of *Him*, do we sorrow for *Him*, because we love Him? Do we not often think more of those for whom we pray than of Him Whom they have dishonoured? Sometimes are we not even influenced in our prayers for others by some matter of self-interest more than by pure desire for our Lord? Our prayers would be more powerful if they were inspired by love in the communion of the Cross. How our Divine Lord Himself prayed throughout His Passion in His consuming love for the Father, and His burning desire for the salvation of all sinners. The more our love

consumes us, the more shall we pray in silence and in tears, for we shall know the Heart of Jesus.

Conformity to the likeness of Jesus is thus found to be nothing less than the change from all that is merely outward and human, into that which is inward and divine, as love transforms us; the change from earthly to heavenly thoughts and desires, as we learn the secrets of Divine love from our Lord Himself in the way of the Cross.

Great is this interior work of love, and it is blessed in the unspeakable richness of the life in which it is accomplished. We cannot wonder at the unearthly character of the Saints in whom it has been perfected, nor can we wonder at those who amongst ourselves are following in their footsteps. Rather let us see in their love the truth that the attraction of the Cross of Jesus has not ceased, but that the power of His love is ever fresh and prevailing in the making of Saints.

Let us acknowledge its power over ourselves by such perfect surrender to our Lord as will make it effectual to our own sanctification. We should not stand apart from the working of His love, for by our surrender we both further His work, and also prove for ourselves that the way of the Cross is the way of life.

CHAPTER XI

The Fruits of the Passion

The victory of the Cross is the victory of love. That is the ideal set before us, the certainty which is to assure us and sustain us through all the pain of our sacrifice, and all that noughting of the self which is necessary to perfect conformity to our Lord. We cannot have our part in the fruit of His Passion if we are unwilling to suffer. There must be a true participation, not merely of necessity, but of choice, if we would know the glory of the Passion in ourselves. God gives us the opportunity, but He leaves us free to embrace it, or refuse it, as we will. The glory of the Cross is never thrust upon an unwilling soul. But it is not only of suffering that we are to think; there was a purpose in our Lord's Passion which we can appreciate through our own experience as we pass beyond the pain, and through the death of self-love, into the holy realization of *life*—the new life in Him. The great victory of the Cross will be declared in its fulness at the last when our Lord comes "*to be glorified in His Saints*," when we shall see the result of every conflict; the fruit of holy

courage; the triumph of heroic love, sustained to the last moment of life in this world. But even now while we are "*in the flesh*" and waiting that great Day, we are permitted to see some fruits of the Passion for our consolation and encouragement. In considering their character now we need to bear in mind that they are contingent upon a true conformity to the Passion of Jesus. We cannot have them at all if there has been no death of the old nature, if the self with all its pride has not been mortified. The fruit of the Passion is for those who have risen from the dying into a new life in the power of the Risen Lord. The fruit will be perfected only through the final victory; but it is given now to some extent for the gladdening and enlightenment of the soul in the upward way of spiritual development. There need be no doubt on our part, no hesitation in accepting the evidence of our growing spiritual experience. We cannot be conformed to the dying of Jesus and remain without the fruit of that death. We perceive it in certain interior ways which are simple and yet inspiring, and the first evidence of it is found in quickened spiritual powers and a new joy in exercising them.

1. *Intuition.*

The fruit of the Passion as seen in our Lord, as He appeared in the glory of His Risen Life, was first of all apparent in the evidence of the

spirituality of the Risen Body. His movements were free and independent of all earthly conditions. When He willed to make use of simple earthly things, as when He asked for and accepted food at the hands of His Apostles,[1] it was not of necessity, but of love, that He might assure them of the truth of His Resurrection, and the reality of His Risen Body. All that we are told of the appearances of the Risen Lord show Him to have been concerned more with Heaven than with earth; with the spiritual work of His Apostles; and with the organization of His Church as a Divine institution. Of His previous work He had said: "*It is finished.*" All the wonderful teaching of the forty days rests upon that accomplishment.

Not less real is the difference between the soul's state and spirituality before and after the experience by which it is conformed to the Likeness of our Crucified Lord. And so also the risen life in us rests upon all that we have done in the way of mortification and in dying to our self-love. But it is not in outward things that we first of all prove it for ourselves. It is rather in interior ways that we begin our experience of the risen life, and rejoice in the fruit of the Passion. First of all we awake to a certain clearness of understanding, a perception of God and of Divine things which is at once simpler and deeper than anything we have known before. Our love is of a higher

[1] St. Luke xxiv. 41–43.

order. Whereas we loved once with a constant regard for self-interest, we now love God with great simplicity for His Own sake; and this we find to be delightful in its restfulness as we respond to every holy impulse and rejoice in that which is disclosed within us. We know, we possess, we perceive, without knowing how we do so. We have left our old ways of thinking and knowing; and now with quickened intuition we learn both the things of God, and also the possibilities which are open to ourselves; while guided by purer love we rejoice in truer self-realization.

Of course all this is far removed from pride; indeed, in all things concerning itself the soul is humble; in all things concerning God it is reverent and careful. We cannot but wonder at our own state when we perceive so much unchecked by anything of the past. Rather do we prove that for every pain of the Cross which we have endured we experience a fresh delight in some newly realized capacity for Divine knowledge. If for love we have suffered, so much the more with love are we replenished, and our joy rises in Heaven-ward self-determination. We cannot ever again feel that we are at home in the world. We have intuitions of a fairer life than that of the present, which we recognize as our own; and because it is for us, "*prepared . . . from the foundation of the world*," we begin to possess it rejoicing in our inheritance.

But it is not only that we perceive the beauty of the higher life, we are instructed also in the Heavenly worth of graces and virtues. While we are unmortified we cannot know their worth, because we are then self-loving, and it is only through purified love that we know either the power, or the mystic value, of any grace or virtue. It is easy to deceive ourselves upon this point, until by experience we have proved it true. We need to rise through prayer, taught of love, humble through our mistakes and our blind choosings in self-interest, to the clearer vision of the virtues in their essential relation to Divine perfection, in order to estimate them aright, and to choose them for ourselves. And yet, in so choosing, it is most of all for the glory of Eternal Love—for God. We perceive truth in higher ways, and understand that the secret of the Beatitudes is for those who truly mortify their self-love. The hidden beauty of God is revealed to the humble and the pure.

All this becomes a deeper joy, a diviner occupation as life develops in holiness, and the soul is clothed more simply in the Likeness of the Beloved.

2. *Power.*

Spiritual power characterizes the risen life, as in Jesus, so in us. The power is that of those who are confident because they *see* and *know;* whose mental and spiritual gaze is on spiritual things;

whose inspiration is love so pure and lofty as to preclude fear. And yet it is power concealed under the cloak of humility, exercised in charity, prevailing through gentleness. It is the power of God in man. It is the power which dwells in the Saints; the power which has vanquished the evil of ages; which prevails in prayer; which wins victories for God, and shames the evil-doer.

But although it is so great and accounts for so much in the world, it is not the self-conscious influence of the individual. They in whom it is greatest do not contemplate it in themselves, for it is the power of holiness of which the secret is humility. We can exercise it only while we are intent upon God in self-forgetting devotion, while intuition is linked to the ways of daily life by the heroism of love. This power is ours because we live the true life in which the spirit is supreme. We cannot doubt that the Apostolic teaching of the risen life led to wonderful realization of this power, and it may well be that our own weakness of spiritual life is in part to be accounted for by our own poor development of it. But the risen life cannot be developed in us when the Passion has had no place in our inner experience. We must embrace the Cross, yea, be offered upon it, that so from the grave of the old self the new self may rise in power through the Resurrection of Jesus.

It is therefore the power which increases unto its perfect manifestation in the life of glory. It is

not manifested in the world after a worldly manner; rather it is the silent force of life and love which the world cannot overcome. It is felt as the power inherent in the Church as a spiritual Kingdom, and equally in the humblest follower of the Crucified. It is strongest in that one in whom the Divine union of love is most perfect. As in our Lord the love that triumphed on the Cross became the very glory and radiance of His Risen Life, so where there has been a true conformity to His Passion through the working of love, there is in the Christian a corresponding glory of love, insistent and prevailing.

Again, it is power enabling the soul to rise in spiritual life to ever greater heights according to the will of God. It is to the soul as a wondrous Divine endowment, a realized gift of life to be treasured in humility while it is exercised in holiest joy, the early realization of that which belongs to eternity.

We have evidence of this power wherever the individual life is being developed towards the ideal of love presented in the Life and Passion of Jesus. True, it is, to our thinking, often limited by the narrow bounds of isolated existence; but we must not overlook the fact of the high spiritual unity of all the faithful. No one really lives alone and apart who is living the Christian life in its fulness. "*We are members one of another*," and members of Christ's mystical Body, "*Ye are the Body of Christ*,

and members in particular."[1] In that Body all the members work together. The hidden lives of prayer and contemplation, the secret ministries of holy charity, the lives spent in suffering and loneliness, the active lives spent in winning open victories over the world-powers: all are needed, for in all is the power of the risen Lord.

Greater is the power of sanctity, and wider the influence of holy lives, than the world supposes or cares to estimate. The cause of holy souls is with their Lord, and they are safe in His keeping. There is therefore no cause for discouragement, even though our life be hidden, if only we are faithful to the truth. None are so strong as they who, holding the Catholic Faith in its entirety, realize the full meaning of catholic life; for they are one with the faithful of all ages, the Saints of the past and the present.

The power of the Church is that of Christ manifested in the lives of His Own, who through love have grown unto the perfect realization of the Christian life: "I *live, yet not* I, *but Christ liveth in me.*" This power we understand, yea, feel, as we perceive in ourselves the fruit of the Passion.

3. *Fulness of Life.*

With our eyes open to eternal things, with the solemn consciousness of spiritual power thrilling

[1] Cf. Rom. xii. 5; Eph. v. 30.

our whole being, we cannot but feel that for us life is both full and rich; that it is indeed becoming fuller and richer as each day's experience adds to our knowledge of God, and deepens our sense of His love. The fruit of the Passion in us, the results of our conformity to the Death and Sacrifice of Jesus, are found in growing life. We are not yet perfected. The forty days during which our Lord manifested Himself in His Risen Life led up to the glory of His Ascension. In like manner as we live the risen life we advance in the way of perfection. In the tenderness of His love towards us our Lord permits the fulness of His Own Risen Life to overflow into our lives, notwithstanding our imperfection. Thus we are benefited by His free gift, and share in His triumph even before our own victory has been won. But what a strength is ours in the realization of the fact that we have received of His fulness, and are counted worthy to aspire to the final victory of the Saints. How it should encourage us in the ways of generous love! The more truly we seek to work and to give in consciousness of the fulness and richness of our life in Christ, the more shall we receive of that fulness, even "*grace for grace*," as St. John declares. There is no weakness nor poverty of life when we live in Him, for our reserve of power is the eternal strength of God, and the richness of spiritual gifts is the boundless love of God.

This aspect of life's fulness through the Resurrection of Jesus is important in the experience which awaits us of occasional suffering. We are progressing, and in our progress we shall sometimes be obliged to renew our self-devotion and as it were to accept and embrace the Cross over again. This is familiar enough to those who have gone far on the spiritual road, but it perplexes the untried soul; but let us not allow discouragement. Every such occasion which arrests us in the higher way is but the means which God will bless to the further enrichment of the soul. In bravely overcoming we prove in some new way the abiding fulness of the Risen Life.

Thus to live is to prove the Divine love in ever-growing knowledge. We rise from thought to thought of Divine wisdom as one by one our victories open the way to the further revelation of life and love. We rejoice in life for our Lord's sake, for we live because of Him.

Life becomes full as love is perfected. To have reached the far possibilities of love through the Cross is to have passed beyond the limitations of earth to find the true power of the human soul, and to have realized the rich fulness of life for which we were created. We may have many an after period of pain through the survival of some former temptation; but having once beheld the heights of pure love, we cannot be in peace while not striving to attain to them. And then what

inflowing of new delight do we not experience as Heavenly interests engage our thoughts, and exalt us to purer ideals of life, and evoke aspirations not all unworthy of the love which attracts us. This fulness of life is not that of multiplied activities, but of vigorous love, of pure healthfulness of spirit in which every sense is thrilled with the joy of being. Is it that we experience a little of that which is the wondrous delight of the Saints? It is so; and our enjoyment is in proportion to the pureness of our love.

Do we wonder at the unwearied devotion of the Saints? Do we envy them their long-sustained activities? When we know the joy of true fulness of life we shall be no longer surprised; rather we shall share with them both their joy in the present, and also their glad anticipation of the future wherein life will not only be full, but also fulfilled. Life fulfilled! That is the glad prospect set before all who in patient endurance of their passion are made like to their Lord in the completeness of their work: "*It is finished.*"

Thus there is, through all our sense of the fulness of life, a work to be accomplished, a work for which we need all that life is in order that it may become all that God Himself wills it to be in the eternal enrichment of love.

XII

Victory

They who realize their participation in the Passion of Jesus are likewise called to share in His victory. Their very participation in the suffering of the Cross, and the attitude implied by their willingness to be conformed to His likeness through pain and death, suggest, at least, the hope of victory. But in truth, to the Christian the Cross is more an emblem of victory than of pain. The victory of Jesus through the Passion gives hope to lighten the gloom of the soul's Calvary. The Passion in the spiritual life is consummated in victory.

We cannot proceed from step to step in the Way of the Cross without coming in sight of the end. How is it presented to us? How do we begin to anticipate the final victory and the day when our triumph will be complete in that of all His Saints? The end is presented in that inner consciousness of completeness which we have whenever we are really one with our Lord in the principles of loving action which guided Him in His Passion. The end, indeed, is not attained

because we have embraced the Cross along with Him, but it is assured to persevering love; and as we go forward in the understanding of love we embrace the end though afar off. The very strength which we prove in union with Him, while it wins us daily victories, assures us of final victory by its exhaustlessness and by the increasing importance of our victories as they become more interior and spiritual. Victory belongs indeed to the future if we regard its completeness; but it belongs equally to the present as we regard the steps of the spiritual way; for we can count no step as taken before we have proved that we can hold the advanced position. Victory establishes our right. We have therefore to consider our victory in the Way of the Cross in both these ways.

1. *Present victories.*

Spiritual victories are not merely chance happenings in the course of our days; they are to be expected and therefore to be prepared for and planned in holy wisdom. No one who seeks, through conformity to the Passion of our Lord, to be perfect in love will ever be satisfied with snatching a victory here and there; but will remember that we must hope for victory and sustain the fight with unfailing courage. Love looks on and sees through the smoke and dust of battle the position that must be won and held; and, like

our Divine Lord, we must know that the Cross will ever be surrounded by the enemies of God. It will seem to us that the more earnestly we desire to become like our Lord Beloved, the more bitter becomes the enemy's attack. And that is true. Think of what is involved in the effort to become like Him. How bravely in the simplicity of pure love must we prove our devotion in self-surrender, in mortification and detachment, in acts of submission and reparation, in faithful love and longing desire to be perfectly conformed to His likeness through the suffering of the Cross. In every instance when we have endeavoured to be true to our ideal, and have earnestly contended in the Way of the Cross, we have provoked the enemy and drawn upon ourselves some fresh inward trouble. We cannot be conformed to the Passion of Jesus without such experience, for He was the more bitterly assailed as His love was declared in the calm majesty of endurance. The victory of Jesus was won through the patience of love.

It is a mistake to complain, as some do, because the troubles of the inner life increase whenever they attempt some brave work of love. They shrink from the affliction of the Saints. They forget the first conditions of victory. There can be no victory where there has been no conflict; no consolation of the Sacred Heart where there is no understanding of its sorrows; no perfection

where there has been no trial. And yet it is very hard for some at the beginning of the spiritual life. Earnest, eager, loving souls suffer the most, for they hasten along the way at times almost beyond their powers, and incur the greater danger. They need, therefore, the most sympathetic help; but, alas! they are often only misunderstood. They could often appropriate to themselves the words of the Passion Psalm: "*I looked for some to have pity on Me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me.*" Often, though they suspect it not, their lonely distress is itself the very evidence of the Cross, and of the Passion through which they are to pass to their victory.

In truth every one who suffers for Christ's sake must stand in a sense alone; for such experience is always singular, it is for the individual alone. Thus it was with the Martyrs in the day of their trial. Even though they had the consolation and sympathy of friends, or perhaps of fellow-Martyrs, there was the spiritual experience of each in which he stood alone in his witness, and in his love. How natural are the words of their fellow-Christians who spake of their "Passion."

This distress of the loving soul is, however, not without relief; and the relief is to be found in the very fact of sharing in the sorrow of the Passion, in the deep pain of the Crucified in the close and cruel compassing of the enemy. When we begin to feel the sympathy of Jesus, then

we begin to conquer, because we are raised to an inspiring consciousness of the power of His victorious love. We should, therefore, in all our efforts, in all ways of devotion, and in the practices of the spiritual life, seek to abide with our Lord in close following of His steps in the way of the Cross. This will appear to some as too restrained a method; but it is the only really safe way. Some ardent souls are impatient of everything which suggests slowness, and the way of the Cross appears to them too long, so eager are they to win their victories. But they always suffer for their impatience. Pure love is ever patient; its victories are won through the soul's oneness with our Lord in everything. It is the triumph of His love which is to be desired and sought, not that by which the self is gratified.

By close following of our Lord we are to understand an identification of our wills with His holy will, of our intention with His, so that as we go forward offering and suffering all in union with His Sacrifice and Passion, we win step by step the victory of love. We grow inwardly in love, because to souls thus united to Himself He ever reveals Himself in love. To a great extent our life and our victory must be hidden, but it is to the soul in its hiddenness that He is wont to reveal His most tender love. He does this in such secret and intimate ways that only in hiddenness can they be observed. The victory

is gained over each and every enemy, because in patience we abide in our Lord. And such victories are sure; they exalt the whole life in the strength of Divine love. They lead on to the final victory.

2. *The final victory.*

The victory of Jesus through the Passion was revealed when in love He had endured to the uttermost, and when there was nothing more that the powers of evil could do, or bring against Him. This is also the end set before us in the way of the Cross. The Passion in the spiritual life of the Christian has no other ending than that for which our Lord suffered—the victory of love. Every one of our spiritual victories is in some degree a triumph of love; but as experience proves, they are cumulative and not final. They are steps towards the great victory which is to end our struggles. Every present victory really weakens the enemy's power against us, even though in malice he seems to rage more. It was thus that he raged against our Lord, even to an apparent triumph; and yet behind his boasted power was the weakness of sin. Opposed to him was the unconquerable might of love. Love triumphed then and will triumph again in us as we fight on and suffer, knowing that every victory brings nearer the eternal triumph of love.

The whole secret of spiritual victory lies in

patient love, love that is strong in secret determination, at once holy and joyful, to win for the honour of the Beloved. Thus victorious love is pure love, the love which "*seeketh not its own*," and yet which in seeking only the Beloved finds itself only the more blessedly. Could we for a moment experience the deep and wondrous joy of the Heart of Jesus as He, knowing that Love had conquered, cried; "*It is finished*," we should be more than repaid for every one of life's pains. But is there not for the brave, enduring, loving soul, a real share in that joy? Yes, truly! They who know anything of the power of true love contending for Christ's sake, know that there is an unspeakable contentment when they have proved their love. That is always experienced according to the degree of pureness in our love; and it is a growing joy, a joy which enters only the more wondrously into our being as the day of the final victory of love approaches. It is the calm, still joy of the Saints who have suffered and fought and won in the Way of the Cross, and have proved it to be the way of love.

The final victory is before us. We have no assurance that it will be ours before our death. Therefore we have the present duty of working patiently with a view to that end. The final victory may be nearer than we imagine. The very struggle in which we may be now engaged may end only in the last victory. Some spiritual difficulties there

are which from their very nature are bound to continue for a long while; for in no other way can we be perfectly proved. Some must go on until death ends the struggle. It will then be seen if love has been triumphant. The love which we oppose to the enemy outlives his power. Love soars to the height of God when with our last breath the opportunity of the enemy fails. It is not therefore necessary that we live long enough to enjoy here the fruits of our final victory; but it *is* necessary for us to be like our Lord, and like Him through death to win the victory of immortal love.

There is no hopelessness in the way of the Cross, no doubtfulness of the power of love to conquer. Rather should we say that there is no victory for the soul save through its passion, and no glory without the Cross. The way of the Cross is the sure way; and if in conflict with the world, and all our spiritual enemies, we are sometimes tempted to turn to the glittering consolations of the present, let us remember the "*great cloud of witnesses*," and learn from them how love conquers by the Cross. Let us above all, and with humblest devotion, learn from our Lord Himself the secret of love and of love's endurance as He, going forth, bearing His Cross, calls upon us to follow: "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*"

3. *Conclusion.*

The teaching of the Passion is ever needed; and in a sense it is ever new, for every soul must receive it, and appropriate it in the newness of personal experience. Love is the same, and human nature and earthly trials are the same essentially in every age. Therefore the teaching of Jesus through His Passion is true in the same degree for all ages and for all souls, except, perhaps, that as the end approaches, His words have a more intense significance. He is "*the same yesterday, to-day and for ever*," and so we turn in confidence as our hearts receive the truth in love, and know that while we are faithful to Him in His Passion, He will lead us to a share in His triumph. "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.*"

Let us try to gather up our thoughts. We have considered various points of the spiritual life, each of which involves the soul in suffering. But that was anticipated in the subject we proposed to ourselves: the Passion in the Spiritual Life. We have traced the course of spiritual suffering, and learned, it may be, to understand the place where our feet have stood. We have contemplated the Passion of Jesus, and perceived the secret links which bind us through our own pain to the Cross. We have seen all this; we have looked upon spiritual sufferings; we have realized them in

ourselves; but it has not been a vision of unrelieved agony. It is not, and cannot be, for any one of us, a hopeless outlook; for as long as we are guided by the teaching of the Cross of Jesus, there is the certainty of light and joy as we attain to victory through Him. We have found not one pain, not one call to sacrifice, not one prospect of discipline, which has not revealed a way to love, and which in its degree has not been understood as a work of love. This must be the fact in our spiritual life; the Passion we are called to endure is the way through which we are to participate in the glory of the Beloved; and our inspiration and strength is the love which sustained Him.

Let us encourage ourselves with a great ideal, viz. the victory of love through the Cross. Such an ideal will make the life of suffering glorious. Yes, and more, it will lead to such holy intuitions of love in union with our Lord, such wonderful interior knowledge of God, such pure experience of Divine tenderness, as to take away the hardness, or rather, we shall cease to regard that hardness for the joy of His all-sustaining love.

If at times the details of our earthly life and experience make us impatient, or even *weary* of the Cross, that is only another pain through which to prove our love. "*Let us not be weary in well doing.*"

If there has come to us a thought, a vision, grander than all else, a sweet, ennobling thought

of love that *can* grow until in our utter self-effacement it is perfected in heroic service; if in contemplation of the Passion of Jesus we have aspired to the highest offering of love, let us not fall back again discouraged either by difficulties, or by the sublimity of the ideal before us. Let us rather with the courage of true love follow our Lord in the glorious way of the Cross, being as faithful in small things as we aspire to be in great things; let us put all into His hands, asking only to be and to do that whereby He may be most perfectly and for ever glorified in us.

Unto His eternal glory may our cross be lovingly borne, and our victory bravely won! Amen.

THE END

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The Passion in the spiritual life

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